AUTHOR, PUBLISHER AND GIKUYU NATIONALIST: THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF GAKAARA WA WANJAU

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Thesis submitted to the University of London
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

School of Oriental and African Studies

August 1992

ABSTRACT

The dissertation presents the life and writings of a major and the most prolific writer and publisher in Gikuyu, Gakaara wa Wanjau, whose activity has never ceased in the last fifty years.

The thesis is structured in two parts with appendices:

Part One, "Gakaara and the History of Kenya" sketches a historical background to the activities of Gakaara from his childhood days at Tumutumu Church of Scotland mission station to the early nineties. It also outlines the early studies of the Gikuyu language and traditions and early writings in Gikuyu by other Gikuyu authors.

Part Two, "Gakaara and His Writings", introduces Gakaara's linguistic and orthographic concerns. It also analyses his primers and his pamphlet on English linguistic interferences in Gikuyu.

It examines the impact of the Bible on Gakaara in his formative years and the vernacular press which flourished in the forties; it assesses the influence of the short story correspondence course he received from Britain, while in detention, in the early fifties.

Part Two goes on to examine the nature and structure of Gakaara's fictional writings. It singles out their most relevant stylistic features and suggests a possible framework which can be applied to Gakaara's narratives. It

also focuses on the presentation of characters and on those "human types" which recur most often in his works.

The dissertation also includes three appendices: an extensive interview with Gakaara, English translations of selected writings by Gakaara and a bibliography of Gikuyu studies.

DEDICATION

To the memory of my friend
and colleague Werner Glinga
who encouraged me to
undertake this task but
could never see this work
finished

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my deep gratitude to all the people who have helped and supported me: my supervisor, Dr Graham Furniss, who has always been extremely patient and sympathetic, my Gikuyu friends and precious assistants Fr James Githinji Munene and Mrs Millicent Waithera Muriithi, and Prof. Bernardo Bernardi, Prof. Elena Zubkova Bertoncini and Dr Alain Ricard, the scholars who read my work and made interesting suggestions.

I would also like to acknowledge the "indirect", but equally important, help of Paolo, my mother, my late father, and all those friends whose steady presence in my life gave me the strength to accomplish this task.

This work would not have been possible without the constant collaboration of my friend Gakaara wa Wanjau.

To all these people my endless thanks.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Gakaara wa Wanjau is not only a major writer in Gikuyu and the most prolific Kenyan writer, but he is probably a unique case in Africa of a writer and a publisher in an African language whose activity has never ceased in the last fifty years.

He started writing in the mid-forties and, since then, he has published a large number of booklets relating to Gikuyu customs and culture, Gikuyu language, politics, recent Kenyan history, a prison diary, many pieces of short fiction and several Gikuyu readers for primary school which have been included on the official syllabus.

Gakaara's works are examples of highly independent literary production in that, from the very beginning of his career as a writer, he has published his own books and, since the early sixties, has also printed them.

So far Gakaara's writings have not attracted the attention of many scholars in Kenya and abroad, this study is the first attempt to assess his work(1).

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(1) Ngugi briefly writes about Gakaara in Decolonising the Mind (London, James Currey 1986, pp. 24, 71-2, 74) and so does John Lonsdale in Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya & Africa. Book Two: Violence & Ethnicity (London, James Currey 1992, pp. 429, 431-2, 439, 441). Patrick R. Bennett translated a few works by Gakaara in A Kikuyu Market Literature: Gakaara wa Njau (Ba Shiru Literature Supplement No. 1, 1983), but his introduction to Gakaara's works consists only of three pages. The only specific essay on Gakaara is Ann Biersteker's "An Alternative East African Vision: The wa-Nduuta and Other Stories of Gakaara wa Wanjau", Research in African Literatures, Vol. 22, No. 4, Winter 1991, pp. 63-78.

Gakaara was born at Tumutumu village, near Nyeri, in 1921. His father, a minister of the Church of Scotland Mission, belonged to the christianized and educated Gikuyu élite and sent him to the exclusive Alliance High School, the only fully-fledged secondary school for African students at the time.

In December 1940 the author joined the army and in 1946, after he had come back from the war, he founded, with other friends and ex-servicemen, the African Book Writers Limited.

In the early forties there was no literature of any kind written in Gikuyu, the only works available were the religious books used by missionaries for evangelization, such as catechisms, hymn books and the Bible.

In 1946 Gakaara brought out Uhoro wa Ugurani (The Story of a Marriage), possibly the first work of fiction ever published in Gikuyu.

The end of the forties was a particularly tense political period in Kenya, and it was not by mere chance that Gakaara decided to leave, at least for the moment, the writing of fictional works.

In 1948 he published his first political pamphlet in Kiswahili, Roho ya Kiume na Bidii kwa Mwafrika (The Spirit of Manhood and Perseverance for the African), giving voice to the aspirations and grievances of the emerging Gikuyu petty bourgeoisie.

After his first pamphlet was received enthusiastically, Gakaara decided to become a full-time writer and to set up his own publishing house. In 1951 he founded the Gakaara Book Service in Nairobi and also

started a nationalist monthly in Gikuyu called Waigua atia? (What's the News?). His political writings led to his arrest on 20 October 1952, when a State of Emergency was declared in Kenya by the colonial government.

The author was released in 1959 and lived as a restricted person until June 1960. In the late sixties he went to live in the town of Karatina, not far from his hometown, where he set up his Gakaara Book Service, later on Gakaara Press, and his own printing firm. He is still working and living in Karatina.

Although he never abandoned political and historical writings completely, from the mid-sixties he concentrated on writing "stories" to "teach proper behaviour and Gikuyu customs" to the younger generations who were leaving their villages to go to live in town, and were abandoning a traditional code of morality to follow the new modes of behaviour created by urbanization.

Gakaara, who at the beginning of his career as a writer had been the spokesman for a restricted class of people, became in the sixties a "popular" author, writing for the growing number of literate Gikuyu and addressing those ethical issues the majority of his people felt strongly about.

The length of his writings also throws some light on the kind of audience he is addressing. The average number of pages in his booklets, twenty pages, is aimed at those Gikuyu who cannot spend much time on reading and who are not likely to be attracted by the books written by the other major writer in Gikuyu, Ngugi wa Thiong'o. Furthermore, the low price of Gakaara's booklets, five

Kenya shillings each (approximately ten pence), can be reasonably easily afforded by people who cannot pay fifty shillings or more for a book and who hardly ever visit bookshops. In fact, Gakaara's stories are more likely to be found in the markets and stores of the towns and villages of Gikuyuland than in Nairobi bookshops because they are distributed through different channels from those normally used by the established publishing houses.

In 1976 the author started a publication, with an initial circulation of two thousand copies, entitled Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine (Gikuyu and Mumbi Magazine), named after the ancestors of the Gikuyu. It contained the serialized adventures of Kiwai wa-Nduuta, the protagonist of an earlier booklet of the Atiriri Series, which was reprinted as the first number of the magazine.

The forty-two instalments of the series which have been published so far constitute the bulk of Gakaara's literary output and we know of no other case in any other African literature of a character appearing in serialized stories for so many years.

Gakaara is concerned with those aspects of life which are dramatically present in his disrupted Gikuyu society (and in his fictional world that reflects it). Thus, the role of the artist is, above all, to expose these conflicts and define them as problems to be solved. Hence, the importance of didacticism in Gakaara's stories, which all have problems and solutions as their theme.

If, on the one hand, Gakaara is forced to come to terms with a complex reality dominated by insecurity, on the other, he does not want to renounce his role as guide

to his people. Hence, his attempt to create a fictional world as similar as possible to the real world, but where each act, good or evil, is rewarded or condemned by human or divine justice.

The author's didacticism is not only expressed in the teaching of how to solve a particular problem, but, more generally, in his overall aim of instilling a sense of order and justice in his readers.

If, on the one hand, it would be difficult to draw a parallel between Gakaara and Ngugi, due to the undeniable difference in their readership mentioned above, on the other, it would not be inappropriate to compare Gakaara with another Gikuyu author: the most popular Gikuyu folksinger Joseph Kamaru.

Joseph Kamaru was born in 1938 at Kangema village in Murang'a District(2). He moved to Nairobi in 1958 and changed many jobs. In the mid-sixties he brought out his first record, which contained Uthoni wa Mbathi-ini (Marriage on the Bus, uthoni literally meaning "process of making marriage payments"), a song telling the story of Gakaara's Ni Nii Ndina Nyarwimbo (Me and Nyarwimbo)(3). In

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(2) Unfortunately there are no studies of Kamaru's lyrics. The only article I could find about him is poorly written and probably contains mistakes in the dates reported (see John Kariuki, "A New Release: Singer with Message at it again", The Weekly Review, July 25, 1986, pp. 28-29). For a brief, but accurate survey of the promotion of popular music in East Africa in the fifties and early sixties see: Fleming, Harrey, "Jambo Records and the Promotion of Popular Music in East Africa", Bayreuth African Studies Series, 9 (Special issue on African Music), 1989, pp. 103-137.

(3) See Interview, Appendix 1.

1969 he launched his own independent recording studio and since then he has recorded numerous popular hits. Apart from one cassette in Kiswahili, all his songs are in Gikuyu.

Kamaru's lyrics are carefully worded in a rich Gikuyu language rooted in the author's deep knowledge of traditional customs and deal with everyday problems, as well as politics(4). His works are addressed to the younger generations and are strongly didactic, stressing the importance of complying with the traditional Gikuyu code of behaviour "which has been discarded in the midst of today's sophistication"(5).

Although Kamaru, unlike Gakaara, comes from a poor family and went only briefly to school(6), there are some striking similarities in their personal stories. They have always used Gikuyu as their medium, apart from one book/record in Kiswahili; they address the younger generations; they want to promote Gikuyu customs; they are

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(4) In 1975 his tribute to the late politician Jesse Kariuki sold 75,000 copies within two months of release (40,000 was considered a record at the time). In 1979 Nuu ucio? (Who Is That one?) sold 80,000 copies becoming one of the best sellers in the country's recording history so far. The sales of his newer records are slowing down because of the appearance of new Gikuyu singers into the market. Today Kamaru is still very active. He is the owner of two record shops, one in Nairobi and one in Naivasha town, and he also produces the songs of other artists which are recorded under his Capital Music Store label.

(5) Kamaru's words are quoted by Kariuki, Ibidem, p. 29.

(6) According to the author of the article in The Weekly Review, Kamaru "regularly skipped school to sing in village musical gatherings. After a school life marked by several interruptions and the State of Emergency, Kamaru finally left school in 1957 to pursue an active music career" (Ibidem, p 28).

both artists and businessmen and felt the need to establish their own business in order to publish/produce and print/record their own works and the works of other artists.

Gakaara, as a creative writer in Gikuyu, has dedicated his life to the development of Gikuyu, but only recently has he started writing specifically on the Gikuyu language.

In the early eighties Gakaara met with some Gikuyu intellectuals and scholars who were trying to establish a common Gikuyu orthography and his interest focused on the new orthography proposed by the group, that is to say the writing of double vowels whenever they are pronounced long. He became so concerned about the problem, that he published a series of Gikuyu textbooks with the aim of "correcting the mistakes in the current orthography".

Since, in my view, the greatest priority in assuring the vitality of any language is the encouragement and production of original literature, Gakaara's main contribution to the Gikuyu language does not simply derive from his textbooks, but from the creation of a consistent literature in Gikuyu.

Gakaara wa Wanjau, through the use and promotion of the Gikuyu language and culture, has tried to help his people to maintain their cultural identity. Through the didacticism of his stories, he has tried to guide his people faced with the difficulties of everyday life and to interpret the changes that have affected their lives in the last fifty years.

CHRONOLOGY OF THE MAIN EVENTS IN GAKAARA'S LIFE

1921 Born at Tumutumu village the eldest son of a Church of Scotland minister.

1928-30 Attends Mahiga CSM out-school

1931-8 Attends Tumutumu CSM school

1939 Joins Alliance High School, but is expelled in 1940.

1940-5 Joins the army as a clerical officer and travels in the then British colonies in North and East Africa.

1946 Founds with a few friends the African Book Writers Limited and publishes his first work of fiction, Uhoro wa Ugurani (The Story of a Marriage).

1946 Marries Shifira Wairire.

1946-9 Works as a clerk in Nakuru town.

1948 Publishes his first political pamphlet in Kiswahili, Roho ya Kiume na Bidii kwa Mwafrika (The Spirit of Manhood and Perseverance for the African).

1950-2 Moves to Nairobi, founder of the Gakaara Book Service and editor of the weekly Waigua atia? (What's the News?). Brings out several booklets and a collection of political songs.

1952 Arrested in connection with the Mau Mau movement.

1952-3 Detained at Kajiado Detention Camp.

1953-5 Detained at Manda Island Detention Camp.

1955-6 Detained at Tawka Detention Camp.

1956-7 Detained at Athi River Rehabilitation Camp.

1958 Detained at Karatina Rehabilitation Camp.

1958-9 Detained at Hola Rehabilitation Camp.

1959-60 Restricted at Thaithi village.

1960 His restriction order is suspended.

1960 Joins briefly the staff of Sauti ya KANU (The Voice of KANU), the Swahili newspaper of the Kenya African National Union.

1961 Moves to Nairobi and founds the Gakaara Publishing Service.

1966-7 Revives Gakaara Book Service and publishes the Atiriri Series.

1971 With the assistance of the Industrial and Development Company sets up his printing firm and founds the Gakaara Book Service.

1972-6 Publishes the monthly Gikuyu na Mumbi (Gikuyu and Mumbi).

1976-1985 Publishes the Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine (Gikuyu and Mumbi Magazine) which contains the serialized adventures of Kiwai wa-Nduuta.

1984 His prison diary, Mwandiki wa Mau Mau Ithamirio-ini (Mau Mau Author in Detention) is awarded the Noma for Publishing in Africa.

1985 Seriously wounded in a car crash.

1986 Arrested for alleged association with the underground Mwakenya Movement is released after a few days.

1986-1992 Works and lives in Karatina.

PART I:

GAKAARA AND THE HISTORY OF KENYA

1. THE MISSIONARIES IN GIKUYULAND(1)

1.1 Historical Introduction(2)

(1) This chapter sketches the background to the activities of Gakaara who was educated at mission schools and whose father was a minister of the Church of Scotland Mission. This chapter also gives an outline of the early studies of the Gikuyu language and of the Gikuyu people written by missionaries.

All biographical information on Gakaara contained in the present study is either drawn from his works, or from the interview in Appendix 1, or private conversation and correspondence with him.

(2) The bulk of this discussion is drawn from the following sources: Atieno-Odhiambo, E.S., "A Portrait of the Missionaries in Kenya Before 1939", Kenya Historical Review, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1973, pp. 1-14; Baur, John, The Catholic Church in Kenya: A Centenary History, Nairobi, St. Paul Publications 1991; Barrett, David B.; Mambo, George K. et al., eds, Kenya Churches Handbook: The Development of Kenyan Christianity 1948-1973, Kisumu, Evangel 1973; Frost, Richard, Race Against Time: Human Relations and Politics in Kenya Before Independence, London, Rex Collings 1978; Kanogo, Tabitha, Squatters & the Roots of Mau Mau, London, James Currey 1987, esp. pp. 8-34 and 179-81; Macpherson, R., The Presbyterian Church in Kenya: an Account of the Origins and Growth of the PCEA, Nairobi, PCEA 1970; Rosberg, Carl G.; Nottingham, John, The Myth of 'Mau Mau', New York, Praeger 1966 (Nairobi, Transafrica 1985), esp. pp. 16-22; Oliver, R., The Missionary Factor in East Africa, London, Longmans Green 1952 (2nd ed. Longmans 1965); Sorrenson, M.P.K., Origins of European Settlement in Kenya, Nairobi, Oxford University Press 1968; Tignor, Robert, The Colonial Transformation of Kenya: The Kamba, Kikuyu and Masai from 1900 to 1939, Princeton, Princeton University Press 1975, Chapters VI, IX-XI. Further references will be given, when necessary, in the course of this study.

The historical introductions which open each chapter of Part I are only meant to give a brief historical background to Gakaara's activities and for this reason the introductions are focused on Gikuyuland and on the Gikuyu people. For a comprehensive history of the whole country we refer to specific texts on the subject, and in particular the recently published work by Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, Unhappy valley: Conflict in Kenya & Africa. Book One: State & Class, London, James Currey 1992.

Until the 1880s little official interest was shown by the European powers in acquiring territory in East Africa.

After the 1885 Berlin Conference the Imperial British East Africa Company (IBEAC) was given a royal charter to administer the British sphere of influence in 1888. At first Uganda was the focus of interest as it was strategically important for British control of the Nile.

In 1894 the IBEAC was experiencing financial difficulties in the coastal strip and negotiations were initiated for the government to take over all IBEAC responsibilities. An agreement was reached in 1895 and the East Africa Protectorate was officially established. It comprised the territory of present-day Kenya lying between the coast and the eastern edge of the Rift Valley. In 1920 the East Africa Protectorate became a Colony.

During the early period of half-military and half-civil administration, major events were determining the future social, political and economic pattern of Kenya and Gikuyuland in particular: the coming of the first European settlers, the building of a railway and the arrival of the first missionaries.

Although missionary activity influenced both the growth of an African leadership and the choice of some of the issues on which nationalism later focused, white settlement was to be the single most decisive factor in shaping the character of that nationalism(3).

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(3) Cf. Rosberg, Carl G.; Nottingham, John, op. cit., pp. 18-20. From now on the page references will refer to the second edition published by Transafrica in 1985.

When the British government declared a Protectorate over Kenya, Gikuyu settlement stretched northwards of Nairobi to the slopes of Mount Kenya.

European settlement began in the southern district of Gikuyu country and expanded in the more highly cultivable areas. Administrative officers usually gave settlers immediate authority to occupy land, with the only condition being that they pay the Gikuyu owners a small sum of money.

In a series of excisions, the government alienated about 6% of Gikuyuland. This land comprised what came to be known as the White Highlands, or the Settled Areas, which were set aside for exclusive European agriculture.

As well as access to land, the settlers needed a cheap and abundant supply of labour. It was intended that Africans should be farm-workers on settlers' farms, thus the government proceeded to impose various financial and legislative measures to force Africans into the labour market. The Hut Tax was introduced in 1901 and the Poll Tax in 1910. In 1918 the identification pass, commonly known as kipande ("pass" in Kiswahili), was also introduced to control the movement of African labour and curb desertion.

The indiscriminate alienation of African land rendered several thousand Africans, especially the Gikuyu, landless. Many of them were forced to reside on the same land they once owned as squatters. In return for their services Africans

were entitled to use some of the settlers' land for cultivation or grazing.

In 1899 the Uganda railway, begun in 1895, reached Nairobi and was opened to the public. In 1901 it reached Port Florence (now Kisumu) on Lake Victoria(4). Thus, the missionary societies, which had confined most of their activities to the coast(5) and to Buganda, "engaged in a fresh scramble for the newly accessible areas"(6).

1.2 Early Missions

The Gikuyu were the subjects of early and intensive mission activity, principally by the strongly evangelical Church of Scotland Mission (CSM), the relatively liberal Anglican Church Mission Society (CMS), the rigidly fundamentalist Africa Inland Mission (AIM), and the Gospel Missionary Society (GMS), formed by an AIM group. Two Roman Catholic societies established their mission stations in Gikuyuland, the Holy Ghost Fathers (HGF) and

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(4) The story of the building of the railway is narrated in the following books: Hill, M.F., Permanent Way: The Story of the Kenya and Uganda Railway, Nairobi, East African Railways and Harbours Administration 1946 (repr. East African Literature Bureau 1961 and 1976); Miller, Charles, The Lunatic Express, London, Macmillan 1971 (Nairobi, Westlands Sundries 1987).

(5) In 1844 the Anglican Church Missionary Society, with Krapf and Rebmann, began in Mombasa. Johann Ludwig Krapf translated Genesis 1-3 into Mombasa Kiswahili in 1847 and St. Mark's Gospel into Kikamba in 1850.

(6) Rosberg and Nottingham, op. cit., p. 16. The railway made also possible a European settler economy based on the export of cash crops from the Kenya Highlands.

the Consolata Missionary Society, Istituto Missionario Consolata (IMC).

The missionary occupation of Gikuyuland coincided with that of the settlers and the missionaries took up land alongside settlers, under the same land regulations, and adopted the same methods of cultivation.

The Holy Ghost Fathers, for instance, were the first Europeans to plant coffee in the Central Highlands in their large plantation of 800 acres, where many Gikuyu women worked(7). Eventually, they realized that "the whole enterprise looked dangerously similar to that of the settlers"(8) and sold all their plantations in 1949.

The Gikuyu expressed their suspicion that somehow a missionary was no better than a settler in the proverb Gutiri Mubia na Muthungu, "there is no difference between a Catholic missionary and a settler". Mubia, which

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(7) Baur writes that "the Director of Agriculture, who bought 2,000 seedlings from the mission, praised the crop as 'never surpassed in any part of the West Indies'. On several occasions the mission received first prize" (Baur, op. cit., p. 39). John Baur is a diocesan priest from Switzerland who taught Church History in Nairobi at St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary from 1975 to 1987 and he is now Spiritual Director of the Association of Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA) Pastoral Institute in Eldoret town in North-Western Kenya. His book is rather poor as far as data are concerned (some figures even seem to be wrong) and the presentation is not very scientific since no foot-notes are used to indicate the sources of quotations and information. But, all the same, the book is quite interesting when read "between the lines" because the author recounts anecdotes which show the attitude of the first Catholic missionaries towards Africans and vice-versa.

(8) Ibidem, p. 40.

literally means "Catholic priest(9)", later came to refer to all missionaries without distinction.

The proverb exposes a contradiction in the behaviour of early Catholic missionaries. On the one hand, as priests they claimed to be pro-African because to them all men were equal before God, but, on the other hand, as Europeans, they were openly pro-government.

All missionaries, and the Catholic in particular, strongly supported the government's action in alienating Gikuyuland and had no doubts about the rightness of their own, or the settlers', acquisition of Gikuyuland.

Very few missionaries made attempts to defend African rights to land against the demands of the settlers. The Church of Scotland Mission, which Gakaara's father belonged to, was particularly sensitive to the problems of the Gikuyu(10).

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(9) The word mubia comes from the French mon père. In fact, the first Catholic Fathers who arrived in Gikuyuland belonged to the French missionary society of the Holy Ghost Fathers (Les Pères du Saint Esprit). On the Holy Ghost Fathers, see 1.6.

(10) J.W. Arthur of the Church of Scotland Mission came out strongly in support of the Gikuyu claims to the alienated land. In 1919 Arthur, who was the head of the Scottish Mission and the two Anglican Bishops of Kenya issued a statement in response to the official circular brought out by the chief Native Commissioner on "Native Labour required for non-native farms and other private undertakings" (the two documents appear in the appendix of Leys's work, op. cit., pp. 394-404). Two other CSM missionaries, A.R. Barlow and H.R.A. Philp from Tumutumu mission station, also intervened in the question of forced labour, stressing that labour should be voluntary and criticizing "the government press-gangs which forced men to work in distant parts of the country, with adverse effects on their health and family life" (Sorrenson, op. cit., p. 268). On Arthur and Barlow, see 1.3.

In all missions evangelization was initially very slow(11). But soon the educational activities of the Protestant missions attracted new converts, especially young people.

Unlike the Anglicans and Protestants, the Catholic missionaries did not give high priority to educational activities(12) because they believed more in evangelization through direct contact with the population, personal visits and health care. Thus, the education boom of the 1920s left them behind in the missionary race for Kenyan converts. The situation changed soon after the Second World War when the Italian missionaries, who had been interned during the war, were allowed to return to Kenya on condition that they expanded their educational activities(13).

In order to evangelize the Gikuyu and teach them in the mission schools, the missionaries had first of all to learn the Gikuyu language. Therefore, it is not surprising

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(11) The Church of Scotland missionaries, for instance, baptized their first Gikuyu convert at Kikuyu in 1907 (the mission station had been opened in 1900). The Catholic missionaries of the Consolata baptized their first adult converts in 1911.

(12) The following saying, which was very popular amongst Africans at that time, illustrates the difference between the Catholics' and the Protestants' priorities in their missionary activities: "If you want religion go to the Catholics, if you want schools go to the Protestants". On mission schools, see 1.7.

(13) The number of Catholic converts doubled in the fifties during the State of Emergency; it grew from 53,000 in 1955 to 108,000 in 1958 mostly due to a widespread belief that after the Mau Mau rising it was better to belong to a church in order to avoid suspicion on the part of the government (cf. Baur, John, op. cit., pp. 41-3). On the origin of the word "Mau Mau", see 2.3.

that the first studies of the Gikuyu language were written by "the most educated and intelligent" missionaries:

> "Perhaps a third of those employed by Protestant missions have had a University training(14). To these men we owe a good half of our knowledge of African languages and customs. Many of the less well educated are as good men as can be found in the world. Some are not. Churches at home realise imperfectly that the task of explaining Christianity to an uncivilised people demands exceptional ability of mind. The far from easy task of learning an African language thoroughly is wisely used to get rid of the less intelligent(15)".

Early missionaries established the first Gikuyu grammars and dictionaries. They also transcribed, translated and collected traditional stories, proverbs and songs, with the help of Gikuyu converts, in the course of spreading the Gospel.

The missionaries condemmed the "heathen rites" of the Gikuyu, but at the same time they unwittingly encouraged the young mission-educated Gikuyu to study their language

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(14) The CMS and the CSM had the largest number of educated personnel and it is not by chance that the first important studies of the Gikuyu language and Gikuyu traditions were written by CMS and CSM missionaries.
The CSM paid particular attention to securing graduates with specialized training for its important posts. The personnel of the CSM on the whole were more educated than those of the CMS. Up to 1940, 29 men missionaries had served the CSM, of these six were doctors, another twelve had University degrees, while six of the remaining eleven were industrial instructors. A number of their women missionaries, excluding the qualified nurses, had been to University as well (Atieno-Odhiambo, E. S., op. cit., pp 2-3).
In contrast, there were very few University graduates or even people with a high school degree among the Catholic missionaries.

(15) Leys, Norman, Kenya, London, Hogarth Press 1924, p. 211.

and traditions. As we shall see later on in our work, this aspect should not be overlooked in examining the emergence of a Gikuyu leadership in general and, above all, when studying Gakaara who was educated at CSM mission schools and was the son of a CSM minister.

1.3 The Church of Scotland Mission

In 1898 the Rev Thomas Watson of the East African Scottish Mission established a mission at Kikuyu(16), near Nairobi, (in present-day Kiambu District) which was taken over in 1900 by the Church of Scotland Mission "with a handsome endowment of £ 50,000 from the IBEA Company"(17). Each of the CSM establishments was planned to include a hospital and schools as well as mission buildings.

Kikuyu News, a monthly journal in English initially printed in Scotland, was started at Kikuyu mission in 1908(18).

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(16) In 1891 the EASM had opened their first station at Kibwezi in present-day Machakos District). In 1898 it was transferred to Kikuyu.

(17) Huxley, Elspeth; Curtis, Arnold eds., Pioneers' Scrapbook: Reminiscences of Kenya 1890 to 1968, London, Evans 1980 (1981), p. 45.

(18) The journal was printed in Scotland for many years. It was discontinued in 1957. Barlow wrote in Kikuyu News some interesting articles against forced labour (one article is quoted by Leys, op. cit., pp. 189-90).

In 1908 the Rev Henry Scott opened a new mission at Tumutumu (in present-day Nyeri District) where they built a hospital and a school(19).

Gakaaara's father, Johana Wanjau, and mother, Rachel Warigia, were among the first converts of the CSM in their home area.

Johana Wanjau went to study at Tumutumu primary school and later on became a teacher in the out-schools of the mission. He was ordained minister in 1935.

Arthur Ruffell Barlow, a missionary at Tumutumu(20), can be considered perhaps the greatest scholar in the Gikuyu language(21). Not only was he a pioneer in the study of Gikuyu language and customs, but his writings are still extremely valuable.

He started to note down words for a dictionary in 1904 and his work constitutes the bulk of the only comprehensive Gikuyu-English dictionary which has been

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(19) For a brief account of early educational work by the CSM, see: "Report by the Church of Scotland Mission to the Director of Education" in G.H. Mungeam comp., Kenya: Select Historical Documents 1884-1923, Nairobi, East African Publishing House 1978, pp. 251-2.

(20) He retired from the CSM in 1941, but returned to Kenya briefly in 1953 to help the government information service in anti-Mau Mau propaganda.

(21) The former Gikuyu politician Bildad Kaggia writes in his autobiography: "[Barlow] was a Scot, a famous Kikuyu linguist, for whom I had great admiration because he was the only mzungu ["European" in Kiswahili] I had heard speak with the proper Kikuyu intonations" (Kaggia, Bildad, Roots of Freedom 1923-1963: the Autobiography of Bildad Kaggia, Nairobi, East African Publishing House 1975, p. 51).

published so far(22). Arguably, the revised edition of his Gikuyu grammar(23), originally published in 1914, is the most useful study of the Gikuyu language ever written.

Barlow was the main translator of the first New Testament in Gikuyu(24) with the help of his secretary, Reuben Muriuki Kihuha. He was also assisted by Kamau Ngengi (later Jomo Kenyatta) whom he consulted in london in the early forties (25).

Gakaara said that he could remember Barlow at Tumutumu: "he was an old missionary who was translating the Bible into Gikuyu assisted by two Gikuyu Church elders, Stefano Kariamburi and Reuben Muriuki"(26).

In 1911 Rev Scott died and was succeeded, the following year, by Dr J.W. Arthur, who had come to Kikuyu in 1907(27).

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(22) See, Benson ed., op.cit., pp. vii-viii.

(23) Barlow, A. Ruffell, Studies in Kikuyu Grammar and Idiom, Edinburgh, printed for the Foreign Mission Committee of the Church of Scotland by William Blackwood 1951 (repr. 1960). See also Appendix 3.1.

(24) On Gikuyu translations of the Bible, see 1.9.

(25) Kenyatta's name was Kamau Ngengi. In 1914 he was baptized at Kikuyu mission and given the Christian name of Johnstone. On Kenyatta at Kikuyu, see also 1.7. On Kenyatta as politician and then president of Kenya, see 2.1, 2.10, 3.1, 3.2, 4.1, 5.1. On Gakaara and Kenyatta, see esp. 5.2 and also 2.2, 2.6, 2.9, 5.5 and 5.7.

(26) Interview, Appendix 1. I could not find any other reference to a second assistant to Barlow.

(27) Scott was "a man of great personal charm and driving force, who exercised a tremendous influence over the younger Kikuyu. His habit of wearing a rosebud or carnation in his lapel is perpetuated by some of the leading politicians of the present day who were small children at Kikuyu in the late twenties" (Huxley and Curtis, op. cit., p.).

Like Barlow, Arthur worked on the first Gikuyu translation of the New Testament for the British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS)(28). He became the Chairman of the United Kikuyu Language Committee (UKLC) which, in 1947, established the current Gikuyu orthography(29).

The number of Christians under the Church of Scotland Mission grew rapidly until the setbacks of 1929-1930 due to the female circumcision controversy(30). Today the former CSM, now Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA), is one of the largest Churches in Kenya(31).

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(28) From the earliest days of Protestant missions the London-based BFBS assisted in translating and publishing the Scriptures in Kenya's languages. In 1962 the Bible Society of East Africa (BSEA) was formed and, in 1970, the Bible Society of Kenya (BSK) which cooperates with the BFBS. On the Gikuyu translations of the Bible, see 1.9.

(29) See 6.3.

(30) On the controversy over female circumcision, see 1.12.

(31) In 1943 the Church of Scotland Mission became independent under the name of Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA). In 1946, 2,000 Christians under the Gospel Missionary Society joined the PCEA. From 1962-1967 the PCEA was engaged on Church union consultation with Anglicans and Methodists, which ended in failure. The history of PCEA, updated to 1967, is told in detail in: Macpherson, R., op. cit., 1970.

1.4 The Church Missionary Society

In 1900 the Rev A.W. MacGregor of the Church Missionary Society (CSM)(32) opened a mission station at Kabete (in present-day Kiambu District). Two years later Canon Harry W. Leakey(33) and his wife arrived to take over from MacGregor, who moved up to Fort Hall (now Murang'a).

A.W. MacGregor and C.H. Leakey were among the first pioneers in the study of Gikuyu.

MacGregor's English-Kikuyu Vocabulary and A Grammar of the Kikuyu Language were published in London by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge as early as 1904.

Canon H.W. Leakey also intended to publish a Gikuyu dictionary(34) and, although he never finished it, his manuscript was the main source of material for the Tentative Dictionary of the Kikuyu Language, prepared by his daughter Gladys S.B. Beecher and her husband, the Rev L.J.

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(32) The Church Missionary Society is an Anglican society founded in 1799, which began to work in Kenya in 1844 as a "voluntary association of persons united in obedience to the call of God to proclaim the Gospel in all lands and to gather the people of all races into the fellowship of Christ's Church" (CMS Law 1, quoted in Barrett, David B; Mambo, George K. et al., op. cit., p. 261).

(33) Canon H.W. Leakey was also the headmaster of the mission school at Kabete. For a personal recollection of Leakey, see: Kariuki, Obadiah, A Bishop Facing Mount Kenya: An Autobiograpgy 1902-1978, Nairobi, Uzima 1985.

(34) He was probably assisted by his wife who also knew Gikuyu very well. An anecdote about Mrs Leakey's knowledge of Gikuyu is recounted in: Huxley, Elspeth; Curtis, Arnold, op.cit., p. 34.

Beecher(35), and issued in cyclostyled form at Kahuhia (in present-day Murang'a District) in 1935.

Canon H.W. Leakey worked for many years on a translation of the Bible into Gikuyu and his daughter continued his work with the help of her father's former assistant Matthew Njoroge Kabetu(36).

One of the missionary's sons, the paleontologist Louis Seymour Bazett Leakey, would also contribute to the study of the Gikuyu language and traditions(37).

1.5 The Africa Inland Mission and The Gospel Missionary Society

In 1901 the Africa Inland Mission, a British-American interdenominational organization, set up its headquarters at Kijabe (in present-day Kiambu District). In 1902 a

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(35) Leonard J. Beecher became the first Archbishop of the Kenya Province of the Anglican Church. In 1943 he was appointed a member of the Legislative Council where he "vigorously defended and sought to advance African interests" (Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., p. 143, p. 206 and pp. 222-3). Beecher was also chairman of a committee that published a controversial report on African education, known as the "Beecher Report" (see Committee on African Education African Education in Kenya, Nairobi 1949). He also wrote a book on the Gikuyu People, The Kikuyu, Nairobi, Ndia Kuu Press 1944.

(36) Matthew Njoroge Kabetu was the first secretary of the rural Kikuyu Association (KA), formed in 1920. He wrote two booklets in Gikuyu, see Appendix 3.4.

(37) See Appendix 3.1 and 3.3 under Leakey. He also wrote a book on the Mau Mau movement, Defeating Mau Mau (London, Methuen 1954). On this work, see 2.10.

L.S.B. Leakey's brother, Douglas, who used to work for the Forestry Department, must also have had a sound knowledge of Gikuyu because he "helped in checking the names of trees and plants" for Benson's dictionary (Benson, op.cit., p. viii).

fundamentalist group within the AIM formed itself into the Gospel Missionary Society (GMS) and founded two mission stations in Gikuyuland. It continued, however, to retain close connections with the AIM.

J.E. Henderson of the GMS wrote a series of articles, "Easy Gikuyu Lessons", which were published in the Nairobi newspaper The Times around 1910(38).

1.6 The Holy Ghost Fathers and the Consolata Fathers

In 1860 the Holy Ghost Fathers (Les Pères du Saint Esprit)(39) established the first Christian mission in Zanzibar(40). "Ten years' experience on the coast convinced them that the future of the Church in Kenya would lie in the interior and especially with the numerous Gikuyu people living in the territory entrusted to them"(41). Hence, as soon as the Uganda Railway had reached Nairobi, they opened a mission station near Nairobi in 1901.

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(38) A. R. Barlow in Tentative Studies in Kikuyu Language and Idiom (Edinburgh, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge 1914) lists Henderson's articles in his bibliography of studies on the Gikuyu language, but the reference is incomplete, see Appendix 3.1.

(39) The Holy Ghost Fathers, founded in 1703 for the training of priests, had been in charge of the clergy in the French colonies for many years. They became a proper missionary society in 1848. Till the 1950s they were the largest society which worked in Africa South of the Sahara, having provided the first Catholic missionaries in modern times to work in that region.

(40) The first African Christians were "redeemed" slaves and most of them rejects from the slave market.

(41) Baur, op.cit., p. 38.

The Holy Ghost Fathers jointly with the Italian Fathers of the Consolata Missionary Society, Istituto Missioni della Consolata (IMC)(42), moved from Nairobi to the interior and opened further stations in Gikuyuland.

The first to publish a Gikuyu grammar was the Holy Ghost missionary, A. Hémery, who brought out his booklet as early as 1902(43).

Another Holy Ghost Father, R. Bernhard, produced a Gikuyu grammar in 1908(44).

As soon as the first Consolata missionaries arrived in Kenya in 1902, they tried to learn the Gikuyu language, "arousing, alternatively [sic], cries of admiration and endless laughter [on the part of the Gikuyu people]"(45).

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(42) The Istituto Missioni Consolata (Consolata Missionary Society) was founded in Turin, Italy, in 1901.

(43) Hémery, A., English-Kikuyu Hand-Book, Nairobi, Catholic Mission 1902. The book contains a short English-Gikuyu vocabulary . Baur writes that "Fr Hémery wrote also a Kikuyu catechism" (op.cit., p. 40), no other reference to this catechism appears to be extant.
In 1903 Hémery was transferred to Zanzibar and was replaced by Fr Cayzac. Fr Joseph Cayzac wrote a book about his experience at the mission. It is centred on a Gikuyu "mission boy", Gideon Kimani, see: The Mission Boy: A Romance of New Africa, London, Buns Oates and Washbourne 1927. He also wrote two articles on Gikuyu customs, see Appendix 3.3.

(44) See Appendix 3.1.

(45) Excerpts from the diary of Fr Perlo (one of the first four missionaries who arrived in Kenya) were published in the Consolata magazine La Consolata. The above passage is quoted in: Bottignole, Silvana, Kikuyu Traditional Culture and Christianity, Nairobi, Heinemann 1984, p. 39. The book, in spite of its English title, is a presentation of the results of a questionnaire proposed to the Catholics of the Diocese of Nyeri. It was first published in Italian, as Una chiesa africana si interroga (An African Church Questions Itself), Brescia, Morcelliana 1981.

One of them, Fr Filippo Perlo, translated into Italian the English-Kikuyu hand-book written by Fr Hémery(46).

Fr Costanzo Cagnolo published a work on the Gikuyu people as early as 1933(47) and Fr Giuseppe Barra the first collection of Gikuyu proverbs in 1939(48).

Two other Consolata Fathers, Valentino Ghilardi and Vittorio Merlo Pich, who arrived in Kenya in the thirties, also contributed significantly to the study of the Gikuyu language and Gikuyu traditions(49).

The Consolata missionaries were the first to collect Gikuyu proverbs and they immediately saw some kind of correspondence between some Christian and Gikuyu values and exploited them.

A question which remains open and which would deserve further investigation is whether the missionaries

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(46) Baur writes that, before leaving Nairobi for the interior, "Fr Perlo copied the Kikuyu grammar and dictionary, compiled by Fr Herney [sic] who was in charge of St. Austin" (op.cit., p. 65). I could not trace the Italian translation, unless it is the booklet published in 1910 by the Consolata Fathers in cyclostyled form with no indication of the author, see Appendix 3.1 under Missionari della Consolata.

(47) Cagnolo, Costanzo, The Agikuyu: Their Customs, Traditions and Folklore, Nyeri, Consolata Catholic Mission Printing School 1933. Cagnolo arrived in Kenya in 1913.

(48) Actually, Fr Cagnolo had included a number of Gikuyu proverbs in his book on the Gikuyu people, but that of Barra's was the first collection of Gikuyu proverbs ever published. Both Cagnolo's and Barra's works were published locally by the Consolata printing firm (see 1.10).

(49) See Appendix 3.1 and 3.4 under Ghilardi and Merlo Pick. Fr Merlo Pich used to anglicize his family name and write Pick instead of Pich in order to retain the Italian pronunciation, ch in Italian being pronounced like ck in English.

willingly excluded from their collection those proverbs which contrasted with Christian religion(50).

It is striking that traditional Gikuyu proverbs, as they appear in the available collections, are so close to the Christian code of morality. Hence, it seemed possible that the missionaries had carefully chosen those proverbs which could "support" the Christian religion. But, after studying the works, it became clear that all the proverbs reflected a Christian world-view (and it was the same with the collections of folktales), whereas, for instance, some recent collections, edited by scholars belonging to other ethnic groups further away from European settlements and missions, showed a totally different world-view(51).

Two factors must thus be taken into account when studying Gikuyu traditional proverbs.

The first is that the proverbs were collected by the missionaries in order to christianize the Gikuyu people by showing essential similarities between the Christian and Gikuyu traditional religion and wisdom and their aim must have influenced the choice of which proverbs or folktales to include in or discard from their collections. In fact, the missionaries used to employ those collections, together with the Gikuyu translation of the Bible, to put across their points in their sermons.

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(50) The most recent collections edited by Gikuyu scholars are more or less revised editions of the early collection by Barra.

(51) Cf. e.g.: Mirimo, Abraham K.L., Luyia Sayings, Nairobi, Oxford University Press 1988 and Makila, F.E., Bukusu Folktales, Nairobi, Kenya Literature Bureau 1986.

The first issue brings in the second, that of the sources of the traditional proverbs included in the collections.

For practical reasons the missionaries must have gone to those elders who would not have driven them away, in other words, the members of the Christianized Gikuyu élite. Such people might have felt ashamed of those beliefs which did not comply with the Christian code of morality and be unwilling to discuss them with the missionaries.

In view of the possibility that the original collections may well have been highly selective, we cannot rely on "first-hand" material, and little, if nothing at all, can be done about it, as the only way to have "reliable" collections would be to go to those Gikuyu elders who have rejected Christianity. It would be almost impossible to find an elder who had not come into contact with the Christian religion and who could help scholars to collect a new edition of proverbs and tales, and help them to verify how much the proverbs and tales, in the existing collections, had been influenced by the missionaries and their converted informants.

In looking at how Gakaara uses both traditional Gikuyu and Christian proverbs, we must bear in mind the limits of the collections at our disposal, and also, more importantly, the fact that the author was not the first to use Gikuyu proverbs to underpin Christian morality. He must have been esposed to this kind of rhetoric since he was a child, in his village of Tumutumu, listening to the

sermons of the ministers of the Church of Scotland Mission.

1.7 The Mission Schools(52)

In the years between 1895 and 1911 the government's attention was entirely focused on the establishment of administration, and the few schools for Africans were run by missionaries. Most of the missionary stations offered boarding accommodation to their pupils who were frequently paid to do some form of work. The curriculum laid great stress on practical work, those who progressed a little taught those who were just beginning

In 1911 the Education Department was established and the government assumed responsibility for the direction of educational policy and its implementation through the establishment of a system of elementary and higher schools and by granting of financial aid to the missions which were left generally responsible for the whole system.

In earlier years only limited provision was made for formal secondary education. Certain missionaries gave private tuition beyond the primary stage, which was the limit of the existing schools, to some of their more promising pupils. The Church of Scotland Mission did a

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(52) For further discussion on this topic see the following: Committee on African Education, op. cit. (better known as "Beecher Report"); Sorrenson, M.P.K., op,. cit., esp. pp. 256-270; Anderson, John, The Struggle for the School, London, Longman 1970; Rosberg and Nottingham, op.cit., esp. pp. 16-22 .

little secondary education at Kikuyu and Tumutumu, where Gakaara was educated(53).

Government schools for Africans were very few and very costly, as the staff had to be paid at full market rates. Therefore missions, and the Protestant missions in particular, had a practical monopoly of education for Africans.

In the years before the First World War, the limited form of elementary education introduced by the missionaries had already reached a small group of young men, encouraging in them a common wish to 'progress' and enter fully into the new social order(54):

> "The religious motive is not the only one that determines the attitude of Africans to Christianity. The wish to acquire knowledge and the ambition to gain wealth and influence are nearly always powerful (...) Their appetite for education is enormous, and has far outstripped the missions' power of supplying it (...)(55)".

At first, the educated Gikuyu accepted European power almost without demur, but the situation changed completely after the First World War.

The source of Kenyan Africans' first experiments in organized political activity lies in their experience during the war, whether from participating in small

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(53) Beecher Report, op. cit., p. 3.

(54) Rosberg, Carl G.; Nottingham, John, op. cit., p. 18.

(55) Leys, Norman, op. cit., pp. 242-4.

numbers with regular military units or in large numbers as porters in the Carrier Corps(56).

These organized political activities began in 1919 with the formation of the Kikuyu Association (KA)(57) in Southern Kiambu, where the Gikuyu had lost the most land to the settlers. The following year the more militant East African Association (EAA) was founded in Nairobi by the leading Gikuyu politician Harry Thuku. This predominantly Gikuyu organization(58) spoke out against compulsory labour recruitment, against increases in the hut tax and in particular against the requirement that all adult males carry a pass.

In 1924 the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA), the most prominent of the African political organizations before the Second World War, was formed in Nairobi(59).

From the early twenties onward, the Gikuyu increasingly began to question missionary motives and objectives. In 1934 Parmenas Githendu Mockerie(60), a former student at Kahuhia CMS school, published in Britain

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(56) During the First World War European and African soldiers fought together and the collective wartime experience proved significant for the development of African politics in the 1920s (cf. Rosberg, Carl G.; Nottingham, John, op. cit., esp. pp. 26-34).

(57) The first documentary evidence of the Kikuyu Association is a letter dated 1920 (see also 1.4).

(58) Although the EAA was not entirely Gikuyu, its membership was predominantly Gikuyu.

(59) The KCA stood as a champion of Gikuyu cultural nationalism and led the protest against the missionaries' condemnation of female circumcision (see also 1.12).

(60) His real name was Mũkĩri, but he anglicized it as Mockerie.

An African Speaks for His People, where, for the first time, a black Kenyan expressed his views on British administration in Kenya. It was the first book written by a Gikuyu and a black Kenyan(61) and it contained a whole chapter on education where the author criticised the poor level of mission schools. He proposed, "in the interests of the African people", to remove "elementary education from the hands of missionary organisations and place it in the control of the State"(62).

The authority of the missions was no longer taken for granted by the mission-educated Gikuyu. The need to abandon Gikuyu customs, and in particular the circumcision of girls(63), in order to become or remain a true Christian, began to be challenged.

Among the group of mission-educated young men were most, if not all, the future Gikuyu politicians and intellectuals of the "first generation". For example, Harry Thuku, the first Gikuyu politician, was educated at

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(61) Mockerie, Parmenas Githendu, An African Speaks for His People, London, The Hogarth Press 1934. Mockerie spent several years abroad in the early thirties and, when he came back to Kenya, he became a local chief. A brief autobiography by Parmenas Mockerie appeared in a collection, see "The Story of Parmenas Mockerie of the Kikuyu Tribe", in Margery Perham ed., Ten Africans: a Collection of Life Stories, London, Faber & Faber 1936, pp. 159-72. On Mockerie, see also 1.10.

The second book by a Gikuyu and a Kenyan to appear was Kenyatta's Facing Mount Kenya (London, Secker & Warburg) in 1938. Both books were written in English and published in Britain for a British audience.

(62) Mockerie, Parmenas Githendu, op. cit., p. 36.

(63) See 1.12.

Kambui GMS mission school and Jomo Kenyatta(64) went to Tumutumu CSM school at the age of about ten and received his basic education in English, arithmetic, Bible study(65) and carpentry training.

Gakaara, who was born in 1921 at Tumutumu, was educated at CSM schools. He went first to Mahiga out-school (1928-30) and then to Tumutumu school (1931-8).

Younger than Thuku and Kenyatta, Gakaara also belonged to the mission-educated élite, although if we talk in terms of "generations", he should be placed in the "Second World War generation", that is to say the generation marked by the Second World War experience(66).

By the time Gakaara left Tumutumu CSM school in 1938, a new higher institution had been founded which would strongly influence African political leaders and intellectuals: Alliance High School.

1.8 Alliance High School

The Alliance High School, in present-day Kiambu District, was founded in 1926 by the Alliance of Protestant Missions of Kenya to be the centre of higher

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(64) On Kenyatta at Tumutumu CSM mission see also 1.3.

(65) Kenyatta used both quotations from the Bible and traditional Gikuyu proverbs in his writings and speeches, 2.6.

(66) Carl G. Rosberg and John Nottingham in The Myth of 'Mau Mau' stress the importance of the role played by the war experience in creating a political consciousness among Africans in Kenya. It would be extremely interesting to devote a whole study to early Kenyan politicians focusing it on the experiences that shaped their political outlook.

learning for Africans in Kenya. Here specially selected Africans, drawn from every district, received an education modelled on British Public School lines(67).

Alliance became, especially under the CMS missionary Edward Carey Francis(68), who was its second headmaster from 1940 to 1962, the training ground for the future ruling African élite.

Many of Kenya's future political leaders first met at Alliance. Gakaara, for instance, was schoolmate of three future ministers, Paul Joseph Ngei, Jeremiah J. Nyagah and Roland Ngala(69).

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(67) Obadiah Kariuki, future Bishop of Mount Kenya Diocese, was among the first students to join Alliance in 1926. He writes: "Being selected to go to Alliance High School was an overwhelming thrill for me (...) At Alliance we were said to be training as members of the new educated élite (...)" (Kariuki, Obadiah, op. cit., p. 28).

On the contrary, not to go to Alliance was a real tragedy for the future politician Bildad Kaggia, who had been selected to go to the school, but could not go because of a dispute with his father. Kaggia writes in his autobiography: "For a number of days I could not eat because I was always crying" (Kaggia, Bildad, op. cit. pp. 14-15).

(68) On Alliance High School, see: Greaves, L.B., Carey Francis of Kenya, London, Rex Collings 1969; Kipkorir, B.E., "Carey Francis at the Alliance High School, Kikuyu 1940-1962" in B.E. Kipkorir ed., Biographical Essays on Imperialism and Collaboration in Colonial Kenya, Nairobi, Kenya Literature Bureau 1980, pp. 112-159. On Carey Francis see also Frost, Richard, op. cit, p. 40 and 214-5. For a personal recollection of Carey Francis, see: Odinga, Oginga, Not Yet Uhuru, London, Heinemann 1967 (1982), pp. 32-4 and 43-8. The leading Luo politician Oginga Odinga attended Maseno School when Francis was its Principal. He joined Alliance in 1934.

(69) He was also a schoolmate of the Gikuyu businessman, B. Mareka Gecaga. On Gecaga, see also 1.10 and 3.1.

Gakaara joined Alliance in 1939(70) and was expelled in 1940, shortly after the arrival of Carey Francis.

The new headmaster was "not happy that the school should be immune from the discomforts and sacrifices of the war" and proposed "a scheme whereby boys should grow vegetables in their spare time and sell them to the school kitchen, the proceeds to go to the Kenya War Fund"(71). He put up a notice asking for volunteers, but nobody came forward and some boys took the notice down.

Francis stopped the issue of sugar as a punishment, but the boys refused to eat their ration of gruel and demonstrated against the headmaster. One of the demonstrators was caned by Francis and, on seeing that, "the rest stampeded, seized their possessions and left the school"(72).

Ten days later all the boys had to apply for re-admission, declaring they were ready to take whatever punishment they might be given. Only three boys, and Gakaara among them, who "refused punishment and were exceedingly rude to the master on duty were expelled"(73).

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(70) Gakaara was the first born and the first to go to Alliance High School. Later on all his four younger brothers went to study there.

(71) L.B. Greaves, op. cit., p. 64.

(72) B.E. Kipkorir, op. cit., p. 123.

(73) Ibidem, p. 124. The other two boys expelled with Gakaara were Muchohi Gikonyo, who became the first mayor of Nairobi, and Joel Thogoro, who joined the army with Gakaara.

Although Gakaara attended Alliance only for a brief period, he maintained close contacts with his former schoolmates(74).

The importance of Alliance is demonstrated in the continuing dominance of political and administrative roles by former Alliance students(75). Probably no single school has ever exercised more influence over a whole generation than Alliance. A very high proportion of Kenya's future leaders, Cabinet Ministers, civil servants, ambassadors, businessmen and writers(76), were educated there. Today Alliance is one of about a thousand schools in Kenya, but its reputation still stands very high(77).

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(74) On Gakaara and Ngei, see 2.6. The two had also fought in the army together.

(75) Kenyatta's brother, James Muigai, was the first student to enrol at Alliance High School when it opened in 1926. Kenyatta's daughter Margaret Wambui went to Alliance Girls' High School when it opened in 1947 (Huxley and Curtis, op.cit, p. 46).

In 1958, 8 of the first 14 African elected members of Parliament had attended Alliance, as had 15 of the 33 Africans elected in 1961, and in the first Republican Cabinet, 10 of the 17 Ministers were Alliance alumni (Rosberg, Carl G.; Nottingham, John, op. cit., p. 76 and Kipkorir, op.cit., p. 113).

Karari Njama, who was one of the few, if not the only, Mau Mau guerrilla fighters with a secondary school education, had studied at Alliance for two years under Carey Francis (see: Barnett, Donald L.; Njama, Karari, Mau Mau from Within, London, MacGibbon & Kee 1966, pp. 88-105).

(76) The leading Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o studied at Alliance from 1954 to 1958, when one of Gakaara's brothers was also there. On the influence of Carey Francis and Alliance over him, see: Cook, David; Okenimpke, Michael, Ngugi wa Thiong'o: An Exploration of His Writings, London, Heinemann 1983, pp. 1-2 and 54-8.

(77) Alliance was started with 26 pupils. In 1972 it had 560 pupils and 30 staff. I could not find updated figures. On education in Kenya since independence, see:

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1.9 The Influence of the Bible

It is a common saying that the white man went to Africa with the Bible in one hand and found that Africans had land. He gave them the Bible and took their land. Thus, the Africans got the Bible and the white man got the land(78). But, in the hands of the Africans, the Bible, the primary tool of missionary education, proved to be a double-edged weapon.

By the year 1916, a great mass movement into the churches of Kenya had begun. Over the next decade the New Testament was translated by the Protestants into the major languages of Kenya, Kikamba (1920), Luhya/Ragoli (1925), Gikuyu (1926)(79) and Luo (1926). This had a significant

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Stabler, Ernest, Education Since Uhuru: the Schools of Kenya, Middletown (Connecticut), Wesleyan University Press 1969.

(78) This saying originated from South Africa and initially referred to the Boers. Soon it became quite common in other parts of Africa. Numerous authors report it, see e.g.: Gicaru, Muga, Land of Sunshine: Scenes of Life in Kenya before Mau Mau, London, Lawrence & Wishart 1958, p. 104.

(79) The following is a chronology of the Gikuyu translations of the Bible from: Barrett, D.B.; Mambo, G.K. et al. eds., op. cit., pp. 23-7. Unfortunately the references given by the authors are incomplete.

1903: St. John's Gospel (Church of Scotland Mission and British and Foreign Bible Society)
1925: First Catholic Scripture translations, Old Testament extracts and Sunday Gospels
1926: New Testament (Church Missionary Society, Church of Scotland Mission, Gospel Missionary Society, Africa Inland Mission, British and Foreign Bible Society, main translator A. Ruffell Barlow)
1936: Gospels published by Catholics
1951: Old Testament (separate from New Testament)
1955: Catholic New Testament
1966: Gikuyu Bible published in a single volume

effect on the direction Christianity was to take in Kenya. Many Christians, who then read the New Testament in their mother tongue for the first time, came to an understanding of the New Testament teaching which differed from the way it had been presented by missionaries. One result was the emergence of separatist or independent churches, especially during the decade 1920-1930.

Catholics attributed the "birth of the clique of the Kikuyu prophets" and that of the independent churches to the Protestant missionaries who were "anxious to place the Bible in the hands of the natives"(80), leaving them free to interpret it. They claimed that the Bible should be interpreted and explained to Africans, who were not able to read it "correctly" by themselves.

They lamented that Protestant missionaries "hastened to teach the Agikuyu reading and writing as if in that consisted the training of the new man, and at the end of their training, they are dismissed with the magic Book (sit venia verbo) ["May Forgiveness Come Through the Word" in Latin] in their hands, with freedom of interpretation

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(80) Cagnolo, Costanzo, op. cit., p. 280. The author refers to the phenomenon of the "Aroti Prophets" among the Gikuyu in the years between 1927-1948. "The members (...) prayed God with one heart that He would remove the Europeans and send them back to their own country, leaving this country to the rightful owners. It was clearly revealed to some of these prophets by the Holy Spirit that the Europeans must in the end go and leave Kenya (...) These things were revealed to Africans by God in Kenya. He showed them new and holy prayers, and also new interpretations of the Word of God, and a spiritual way to read it and to grasp it in the heart just as the Holy Spirit reveals it to a man". The article was written by Elijah Kinyanjui, one of the last surviving members of the early Aroti Prophets (see: Barrett, David B.; Mambo, George K. et al., eds., op. cit., pp. 124-127).

as the only rule, no matter if they chose for their example the teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ, or the sin of David, or even the polygamy of Solomon"(81).

Protestants attached great importance to the Bible itself and this is why they were the first to make translations into African languages. In fact, according to the Protestant reading of the Bible, God and Christ are experienced through the Word. The assent which accompanies every reading is an act of belief which goes beyond what is written and is borne toward God Himself. Hence, the reader (or hearer) of the Gospel is made a disciple of Christ, ipso facto, by the interposed narrative.

Catholics were initially more interested in publishing catechisms and excerpts from the Gospels. But, due to the fact that they could not use the Protestants' translations of the Bible, they had to make their own(82).

There was great competition between Catholic and Protestant missionaries and the former accused the colonial government of favouring the Protestants, thus hindering the spiritual emancipation of the Gikuyu. They claimed that:

> "The importation among the poor Gikuyu pagans of ideas which derive their existence more from the support of the state and from national prestige, than from the eternal truth, is doubtless not putting him on the best way to his spiritual emancipation: it is rather rejecting the substancial food and offering him its husks. In this regard it is beyond doubt that the Catholic Church comes to meet him more

(81) Cagnolo, op. cit., p. 279.

(82) Only recently a unified Bible has been published.

maternally, offering him not a system of thoughts (...), but a social system derived from the direct teachings of the Saviour"(83).

The emergence of the independent churches was not the only effect caused by the translation of the Bible. More important still was the use that the Africans made of the Bible in their political struggle.

Norman Leys had envisaged the problem when he wrote in 1924:

> "It is hard for people in Europe to realise how great and various are the effects of the publication of the New Testament in the language of the common speech of a people with no other literature.
>
> In Africa the book is roughly done into the commonplace language of everyday affairs (...) What is set before Africans is the Jesus of the early records. The response thousands of them make is simply what people always feel about an extremely attractive person.
>
> Africans often feel that the requirements and prohibitions of the mission are too hard, but none ever finds anything to reject in the Jesus of the records. They often apply to their case the contrast of the poor with whom he was so lenient with the rich and powerful whom he cursed. Many of his sayings they misunderstand. Of others they get the meanings from missionaries.
>
> All natives of intelligence fasten on what is the central doctrine of the New Testament, if not of mission teaching, that every Christian is a child of God, a partner by right in the equal fraternity of all Christians.
>
> Many missionaries in their hearts regret that in the Magnificat thanks are given for the dethronement of princes, and that the early Church encouraged intermarriage of European and Asiatic, insisting, indeed, that there was no real difference between them. In any case, missionaries say as little as possible about the doctrine of equal brotherhood. It is unjust to blame them. Any one who preached it as unreservedly as Paul did would have to leave the country. Not one European in a hundred in Africa believes that European and African Christians should behave to one another as members of the same family behave (...) In certain circumstances that book [the

(83) Cagnolo, op. cit., p. 280.

New Testament] plays the part of a revolutionary's handbook(84)".

We shall see later on in this study not only how the Bible influenced Gakaara's writings(85), but also how the Gikuyu politicians and intellectuals used the Bible as a weapon in their struggle against the missionaries and the colonial government(86).

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(84) Leys, Norman, op. cit., pp. 239-41.

(85) See 7.1, 7.2 and 7.5.

(86) The former Gikuyu politician Bildad Kaggia writes in his autobiography that he had been "very interested" in the Bible since he was a schoolboy at Kahuhia CMS school in the early thirties. He enjoyed finding contradictions in the Biblical text and asking his teacher of religion about them (Kaggia, Bildad, op. cit., pp. 12-13). He also "discovered many mistakes in the Kikuyu New Testament" and, in the late forties, when he travelled to Britain, he went to the British and Foreign Bible Society and submitted a list of his corrections to Dr Arthur, who was temporarily in Britain (Ibidem, pp. 48-51).

The influence of the Bible on intellectuals and politicians is not restricted to the early struggles against the missionaries and to the period of the rise of African politics in Kenya (see 2.1, 2.6 and 2.10). The Bible has kept on "playing the role of a revolutionary's handbook" throughout the years. We know for instance that the Mau Mau General Dedan Kimathi used to carry a Bible with him and to quote from it. Ngugi wa Thiong'o often used the parallel with Christ in depicting his characters of Mau Mau fighters, see e.g. Kihika in A Grain of Wheat (London, Heinemann 1967; African Writers Series 1968), Kimathi in The Trial of Dedan Kimathi (written with M.G. Mugo, London, Heinemann 1976) and Matigari in Matigari (Gikuyu original, Nairobi, Heinemann 1987, English translation by Wangui wa Goro, London, Heinemann 1989). More recently, the former Gikuyu politician Koigi wa Wamwere uses quotations from the Bible in his prison notes, see Conscience on Trial (Trenton, N.J., Africa World Press 1988). He writes to his wife that he "went to the Bible" in order to "bear and understand" his detention better: "Dear, that I have now finished reading through all the prophets, it is obvious to me that all men of God spent all their lives struggling against three things, mainly sin, social injustices and any form of alliance with foreign domination, and true worship of Him is tantamount to commitment and struggle against injustices

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1.10 The Missions and Publishing in Gikuyu

The need for studies on African traditions was expressed by Arthur Ruffell Barlow as early as 1912 at a missionary conference. In his paper entitled "Literature on Native Customs" he stressed the importance of promoting the knowledge of African traditions:

> "Definite information in all native customs is urgently required, (a) that we may better understand the people and their outlook, (b) that we may know the native terms we may safely use in the translation of Scripture, (c) that we may have this information to set before new missionaries, (d) that we may know how much of the old system we may use as a basis for the new teaching. A solution to our difficulties is to be found in our obtaining accurate and reliable information as to these customs and clues to their meaning. We can increase our knowledge of customs by a systematic investigation and by putting the information we acquire in permanent form (...) The boys in our senior classes should be encouraged to write essays and prizes might be offered for the best papers (...)(87)".

No matter what the missionaries' motives were for studying the Gikuyu language and customs, for sure "educated boys", like Gakaara, understood that their language was worth studying and were "encouraged to give their traditions permanent form" in writing.

As early as 1928, for instance, a group of Gikuyu teachers and students at Kahuhia (in present-day Murang'a District) Church Missionary Society mission school formed

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and foreign domination" (p. 112). A study of the role of the Bible in Kenyan politics would be extremely interesting.

(87) Mungeam, G.H. comp., op. cit., pp. 168-9.

a group Ngwataniro ya Agikuyu Ahungi Wara (The Gikuyu Folklore Society), which was probably the first association of the kind. Its members "intended to journey through Kikuyu, interviewing old people and collecting facts relating to Kikuyu customs. After collecting these tribal laws, the Society intended to publish a book in Kikuyu"(88), but, unfortunately they never did.

The Protestant missions soon started publishing not only works on Gikuyu language and customs written by their British missionaries, but also books written by their Gikuyu converts. The Church of Scotland Mission at Tumutumu was particularly active in this field and probably Gakaara was indirectly influenced by their work. All these early books were published in Britain as the Protestant missionaries had no printing facilities in Kenya(89).

In 1915 the Consolata Fathers founded the Consolata Catholic Mission Printing School in Nyeri town. They were the first missionary society to establish a printing-press in Gikuyuland, and in Kenya in general. Fr Cagnolo writes:

> "The necessity of supplying with school material the constantly increasing schools suggested the opening of a small printing school. The machinery and

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(88) Mockerie, Parmenas Githendu, op. cit., p. 64. Unfortunately, I could not find any other reference to the Gikuyu Folklore Society. Parmenas Mockerie, who was the president of the society, does not return to this subject in his book. Hence, I do not know either the names of its members, or when it ended its activities. On Mockerie, see also 1.7.

(89) The first Gikuyu grammars and catechisms were published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge for the Church of Scotland Mission, see Appendix 3.1.

> type arrived safe and sound from Italy in 1915 and were installed at once at Nyeri producing catechisms and school books and issuing at the same time the first newspaper in the native language"(90).

In 1916 the Consolata Mission of the Diocese of Nyeri started publishing a religious monthly in Gikuyu, Wathiomo Mukinyu (The True Friend)(91), which has been continuing ever since(92).

The first numbers of the magazine were issued during the First World War and "were given out free, a welcome mouth-piece of Kikuyu to its sons far away at war, and

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(90) Cagnolo, Costanzo, op. cit., p. 276.

(91) The title of the magazine was initially written as Wathiomo Mokinyu, according to the so-called "Nyeri orthography" and then as Wathiomo Mukinyu, according to the orthography established by the United Kikuyu Language Committee (UKLC). On Gikuyu orthography, see 6.3.

(92) Fr Cavicchi writes that the publication of the magazine was interrupted twice: "The first of these [interruptions] ended with the close of the year 1926, but I have no record of the date when it began. The second lasted from July 1940 to the end of 1945" (Cavicchi, Edmondo, Problems of Change in Kikuyu Tribal Society, Bologna, EMI 1977, p. 10 (see also Appendix 3.3). Although the introductory essay is poor, the work done by Fr Cavicchi is extremely valuable as there is no specific study on the first and second generation of Gikuyu Christian converts. An analysis of their motives and aspirations would be very interesting and also relevant to the study of class-formation in Gikuyuland. There are no specific works on this topic, but both Leys and Kitching discuss it in their studies, cf. Kitching, Gavin, Class and Economic Change in Kenya: The Making of an African Petite-Bourgeoisie, New Haven, Yale University Press 1980; Leys, Colin, Underdevelopment in Kenya: The Political Economy of Neo-Colonialism, Berkeley, University of California Press 1974, esp. pp. 204-6 and 214-5. Some useful data can be found in a study of the social composition of Nyeri town by Carl A. Dutto: Nyeri Townsmen, Nairobi, East African Literature Bureau 1975 (esp. pp. 165-199).

bearer of news of the soldiers to their families who were already mourning them as lost"(93).

The publication was meant to be a forum for the discussion of religious issues, but also general problems. It was addressed at first to "the more educated section of the population, the teachers, then, gradually, to the influential elders and a wider range of people: shopkeepers, school-boys and lastly, after the Second World War, girls and ladies"(94).

Although Gakaara fitted into this class of educated Gikuyu, he belonged to the CSM and for this reason he did not participate in the debate launched by the Catholic magazine. In fact, the rivalry between Catholic and Protestant missionary societies was so strong that contacts between the two groups of adepts were almost impossible.

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(93) Cagnolo, Costanzo, op. cit., p. 276.

(94) Ibidem, p. 10. Wathiomo Mukinyu (The True Friend) was for many years the only religious magazine in Gikuyu published in Kenya. Nowadays there are a few periodicals in Gikuyu sponsored by the Protestant churches and one, Wathiomo Mukinyu, by Catholics. A list of religious periodicals, updated to 1973, can be found in: Barrett, David B., et al., op. cit., pp. 331-2. Of the eighty periodicals listed, three are in Gikuyu: the monthly Wathiomo Mukinyu, the quarterly Kimuri (The Torch) and the occasional publication Mugambo wa Youth (The Voice of the Youth), both sponsored by the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA). The quarterly Arahuka (Awake!), sponsored by the Church of the Province of Kenya (CPK), is in Gikuyu and English and the quarterly Jitegemea (Self-Reliance in Kiswahili), sponsored by the PCEA is in Kiswahili, Gikuyu and English. The list is impressive in so much as all other religious periodicals are either in English or Kiswahili and only the Meru, the Kamba, the Luo and the Luhyia peoples (the most numerous with the Gikuyu) have one religious periodical each in their languages.
Unfortunately, no updated list of religious periodicals has been published recently.

As we have already seen, the Protestant missions initially printed their books in Britain. In the thirties and forties there were also possibilities for publishing locally with the CMS Bookshop and with the East African Literature Bureau.

The Church Missionary Society owned a bookshop in Nairobi(95) and since the thirties had been publishing hymn books, catechisms and Bibles.

In 1934 the CMS Bookshop published one of the first works written by a Gikuyu convert, Miikarire ya Agikuyu (The Customs of the Gikuyu). The author, Stanley Kiama Gathigira, was Inspector of Schools in 1928-1935.

In 1946 the CMS Bookshop brought out Mareka B. Gecaga's Kariuki na Muthoni (Kariuki and Muthoni)(96), which was followed in 1948 by Coro (The Bugle) written by Sospeter Munuhe, who was probably a teacher at the CSM Tumutumu School.

As part of the general interest in writing created by the missionaries, some mission-educated Gikuyu, who for

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(95) The CMS Bookshop had been for many years the only bookshop in Kenya where religious books were available. We read in Gakaara's prison diary that the "reading materials" for the school at Kajiado Detention Camp were from the CSM bookshop (Mau Mau Author in Detention, Nairobi, Heinemann 1988, p. 20). In 1940 the Catholics opened the Catholic Bookshop and, in 1968, it was moved into the present premises in the centre of Nairobi, not far from the CSM bookshop. The Nairobi Catholic Bookshop is one of the largest Catholic bookshops in the world.

(96) The book was translated into English and published in 1949 by The Eagle Press (East African Literature Bureau) under the title Home life in Kikuyu land or Kariuki and Muthoni. Gecaga also wrote a Gikuyu grammar with W. Kirkaldy-Willis (see Appendix 3.1 also for biographical information on Gecaga).

some reason were not sponsored by missionaries in publishing their works, started financing the publication of their own books. The first case is arguably that of Justin Itotia who was a teacher at the CMS Jeanes School and owned a bookshop at Kikuyu. In 1944 he published, at his own expense(97), the first collection of Gikuyu proverbs written by a Gikuyu, Thimo cia Ugikuyu Itari Thimure: Gicunji kia Mbere (Gikuyu Proverbs Without Explanation: Part One) (98).

1.11 The East African Literature Bureau

In 1947 Charles Richards, who had been manager of the CMS Bookshop since 1935, was asked by the government to set up the East African Literature Bureau(99).

The aim of the EALB was "to produce a lot of literature that would help the development of the country - books on health and agriculture, etc. But also on the

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(97) He may have been encouraged to publish his collection by CMS missionaries, but he does not mention it in his brief foreword to the book.

(98) The booklet contains 851 proverbs listed in no order. Although the title of the book implies the existence of a second collection by the same author, there appears to be no other and it is doubtful whether it was ever published.

(99) Charles Richards was also founding director of the Ndia Kuu Press which was meant to produce "books that the church would use in its contacts with people. But this was only a step towards my chief interest. the name itself, the Swahilii for highway, explains the thinking of print as a highway along which people pass in two directions. At the same time so much was being brought into Africa but I was hoping that we could begin contributing from Africa itself. That was something new" (Charles Richards interviewed by Keith Smith, The African Book Publishing Record, Vol. II, No. 2, April 1976, p. 161).

imaginative side, books to express the African personality - fiction, history, poetry, recording of the past and such things"(100).

Particulary successful was the EALB's policy of encouraging Africans to write in their own languages(101). The EALB started advertising that they were looking for African authors and set up various committees in the languages they intended to publish. The language committees usually included a government officer, African school teachers and missionaries.

The EALB was government-funded and government-controlled and the missionaries in the language committees could still influence the choice of material for publication. In fact, one of the first two works to appear on Gikuyu oral literature, was written by Stanley Kiama Gathigira who had already published a book on Gikuyu customs sponsored by the CMS(102).

Only in the sixties, after independence, the EALB started promoting authors who were not necessarily Christians(103).

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(100) Ibidem, p. 161. Among the first authors "discovered" by the EALB in the early fifties was the Kamba theologian John Mbiti, who, at that time, was still a school-boy.

(101) At first they concentrated on four languages: Kiswahili, Luganda, Gikuyu and Luo.

(102) See also 1.10. The other book published by EALB in 1950 was B. Mareka Gecaga's Gwata Ndai: Ndai na Ng'ano (Solve the Riddles: Riddles and Folktales).
The section of EALB specializing in literature in African languages was The Eagle Press.

(103) Among them was Ngugi wa Thiong'o, who in the

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In 1964 Gakaara was awarded the second prize in a a competition for the best short story with "Ndakenjerwo Mbui Mucii Uyu" (I Won't Be Shaved in This House)(104). But, in colonial Kenya, Africans willing to publish without undergoing missionary or government control, had no official channels for publishing their works.

1.12 The Independent Schools Movement

In 1924 Dr Philp of Tumutumu CSM published a pamphlet condemning the Gikuyu custom of female circumcision or clitoridectomy. It was the beginning of a controversy between the CSM and the leaders and members of the KCA who were also baptized members of the Tumutumu Church. Soon the controversy involved also the other missions working in Gikuyuland.

The KCA strongly opposed and condemned the missionaries' interference with Gikuyu customs. They used the Bible to refute the missionaries' arguments, saying that nowhere in the Bible was there any reference to this matter. They also argued that the term used in the Gikuyu translation of the New Testament for the Virgin Mary was muiritu, the Gikuyu word for a circumcised girl(105).

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seventies was also a board member of EALB. The EALB became, after independence, the first fully Africanised government department in East Africa.

(104) The short story was not published and Gakaara does not know the reason. He gave me a copy of the manuscript and thus I was able to read the short story.

(105) Rosberg, Carl G.; Nottingham, John, op. cit., pp. 119-120.

The consequence of the controversy was a crisis from 1928 to 1931 which resulted in the dismissal from the Church of those who adhered to female circumcision. Their children were no longer allowed to attend mission schools and this led to a major educational crisis in Central Kenya.

The immediate effect was the formation of the Kikuyu Independent Schools Movement, under the names of the Kikuyu Karing'a(106) Educational Association (KKEA) and the Kikuyu Independent Schools Association (KISA). Both of them came to be involved in Gikuyu politics and by 1946 there were 3,000 independent schools educating some 60,000 children.

If on the one hand the missionaries were encouraging their educated converts to write, on the other hand, several teachers in the Kikuyu Independent Schools started publishing their own books.

Arguably, the first political pamphlet in Gikuyu was Kamuingi Koyaga Ndiri (A Small Group of People Lifts the Heavy Mortar)(107), published in 1945 and written by

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(106) From the verses of the song muthirigu "I am a Gikuyu karing'a", or "pure Gikuyu". The muthirigu was a Gikuyu adaptation of a coastal song, with a rousing chorus and an unlimited number of improvised verses, used to mock missionaries and their condemnation of female circumcision. It was banned in 1930.

(107) Kamuingi Koyaga Ndiri, "A Small Group of People Lift the Heavy Mortar", is a Gikuyu proverb; the ndiri is a heavy wooden mortar, used for pounding sugar-cane when brewing traditional beer. Mugweru's work was published in the same year as Henry Muoria Mwaniki's first political pamphlet, Tungika Atia Iya Witu? (What Can We Do for Our Own Sake?) (on Muoria, see 2.6, 2.8 and 2.10). Only by establishing the month of publication would it be possible to determine which came first. Unfortunately, there are neither bibliographies nor studies of Gikuyu writings and, since the bibliographies in Appendix 3 and this brief outline are the first attempts to present and discuss

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Mwaniki Mugweru(108), a former student at Tumutumu CSM school and then teacher at Waithaka KKEA school. In that year Mugweru, Gakaara and a group of friends founded the African Book Writers Limited(109), but since it was not registered at that time, the name of the company does not appear in the booklet, although they actually met the publishing costs(110). Kamuingi Koyaga Ndiri (A Small Group of People Lifts the Heavy Mortar) was published again in 1952 by Gakaara's Gakaara Book Service(111).

We shall see in the next chapter how Gakaara's decision to become a writer was influenced by his close association with teachers of the independent schools.

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Gikuyu literature, I am conscious of the limitations of this work. A general history of Gikuyu literature would constitute a study in itself.

(108) On Mugweru see also 2.9, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4 and 3.7.

(109) See 2.3.

(110) Mugweru published also the following booklets: Urimi na Uriithi wa Ng'ombe (Farming and Cow-Breeding), 1945, Riua Ritanathua (Before the Sun Sets), Karatina, African Book Writers Limited 1946 (repr. Nairobi, Gakaara Book Service 1952), Wiyathi wa Andu Airu (Freedom for Black People), Nairobi, Gakaara Book Service 1952. He also brought out, with Karimu Njung'wa, African Progress, Karatina, African Book Writers Limited 1946.

(111) On Gakaara Book Service, see 2.8 and also 11.15.

2. THE RISE OF AFRICAN POLITICS: THE FORTIES

2.1 Historical Introduction(1)

After the First World War the missions became active behind the scenes in Gikuyu politics, promoting the interests of their converts. At the same time, the doctrinal rigidity and cultural narrowness of the more evangelical mission societies managed to alienate a number of their young converts, some of whom began to find their way into urban employment, especially in Nairobi, where they became involved in politics.

Many educated young men estranged from the local mission societies joined the Kikuyu Central Association (KCA).

In the forties KCA leaders began to openly oppose the Christian religion. In the first KCA oath the members of the association used the Bible and the soil as its

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(1) The bulk of this discussion is drawn from the following sources: Barnett, Donald L.; Njama, Karari, op. cit.; Berman, Bruce, Control & Crisis in Colonial Kenya: The Dialectic of Domination, London, James Currey 1990; Kaggia, Bildad, op. cit.; Kanogo, Tabitha, op. cit.; Odinga, Oginga, op. cit.; Parkin, David, The Cultural Definition of Political Response, London, Academic Press 1978; Rosberg, Carl G.; Nottingham, John, op. cit.; Throup, David W., Economic & social Origins of Mau Mau, London, James Currey 1987. Further references, if any, will be given at the beginning of each section.

symbols(2), whereas in the forties the new KCA oath in place of the Bible used goat meat, as in the traditional Gikuyu oath. This detail is particularly revealing of the politicians' new attitude towards the Christian religion.

In 1940 the KCA was officially banned as a wartime emergency measure and many of its leaders were detained and released three or four years later.

In 1944 the Kenya African Union (KAU) was formed(3) and one of its members, Eliud W. Mathu, was elected the first African appointee in the Legislative Council(4).

In 1946 Kenyatta returned to Kenya as the undisputed leader of the nationalist movement and, in 1947, he was elected to the presidency of KAU.

KAU leaders began a process of building a country-wide organization to broaden the national character of the association. In fact, in so much as KAU was the successor of the banned KCA, most of its members were still Gikuyu and they constituted almost the entire executive committee.

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(2) For a description of the first KCA oath, see e.g.: Spencer, John, ed., James Beauttah: Freedom Fighter, Nairobi, Stellascope 1983, pp. 26-7.

(3) The group was renamed Kenya African Students Union (KASU) and, in 1946, it reverted to its original name, KAU.

(4) Mathu had taught at Alliance High School for many years and most of the educated African élite had studied under him.

(and Gecaara among them)

When Gakaara started writing in the late forties, African participation in politics had become increasingly militant and his activities must be seen as part of a general climate of opposition and dissent in Kenya, and in Gikuyuland in particular.

Gakaara's experiences abroad in the Second World War proved significant in shaping his attitude towards the colonial government. Back in Kenya he associated with ex-servicemen and teachers of the Kikuyu Independent Schools and, later on, when he moved to Nairobi, he became actively involved in politics and joined KAU.

2.2 The Second World War(5)

The Second World War was a watershed in the growth and development of African nationalism in Kenya as in Tropical Africa as a whole. Prior to the war African political organizations neither commanded a mass following nor essentially challenged the legitimacy of the colonial state. The post-war years were to witness for the first time mass political movements under a leadership determined to replace colonial rule with African majority rule.

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(5) See Rosberg, Carl G.; Nottingham, John, op. cit., esp. pp. 188-212.

Post-war nationalism developed in an environment where settler leaders, helped indirectly by the development policies of the local administration, tried to consolidate their political power. The organizations and tactics employed by African leaders to change this restrictive situation took various forms, both overt and covert. There was an overt, constitutional level of post-war African politics in Kenya. With the failure on this level to achieve substantial reform, militant leaders and covert organizations assumed a dominant role in challenging European and colonial control(6).

The number of Kenya Africans directly involved in the Second World War was probably little greater than in the First World War(7). There was, however, an important difference. In 1942 the King's African Rifles fought for the first time outside Africa and were subjected to new influences(8). In the fifties a few ex-servicemen would

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(6) Ibidem, pp. 188-9.

(7) By comparison with other Kenya peoples, few Gikuyu were front-line soldiers: "The contribution of the Gikuyu is mainly as clerks, signallers, hospital staff and personal servants" (Report on Native Affairs 1939-1945, p. 59, quoted in Rosberg, Carl G.; Nottingham, John, op. cit., p. 194).

(8) The future Gikuyu politician Bildad Kaggia, for instance, made friends with a black American officer and his discussion with him marked the beginning of his "political conscience". Kaggia writes: "My mind became occupied with what he could do to change things first in the army and then in Kenya. I read political and

.../

use their experience in the war to organize the Mau Mau struggle in the forest(9).

Gakaara, who by 1940 had been expelled from Alliance High School(10) and was unemployed, decided to join the army.

In December 1940 Gakaara was taken on as a clerical officer and travelled in North and East Africa where he met "many Africans from the then British colonies" and "learned much (...) about the hunger and yearning for freedom of colonised peoples"(11). He realised that "the British persisted in treating black people as slaves although they were shedding blood for the British cause"(12).

Many Africans, and Gakaara among them, came back to Kenya with new values and with their expectations raised by the war and they were deeply dissatisfied with the economic and political situation they found in their country(13). For this reason, a great number of them

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revolutionary books which opened my eyes and broadened my vision" (Kaggia, Bildad, op. cit., pp. 36-37).

(9) That was the case with "General China", Waruhiu Itote. On the the origin of the word "Mau Mau", see 2,3.

(10) On Gakaara at Alliance High School, see 1.8.

(11) Gakaara wa Wanjau, Mau Mau Author in Detention, p. x.

(12) Ibidem, p. x.

(13) Many post-war African leaders had fought in the .../

joined the Kenya African Union(14). Gakaara became a member in 1946.

The Second World War experience had marked Gakaara's generation and created a gap between them and part of the older generation. In Gakaara's words, Christian elders, and his father among them, could not understand the political demands and concerns of the younger generation and thought that "ex-servicemen and young men were confused by Kenyatta's politics and had lost the right path"(15).

2.3 The Post-War Period

The most significant economic change had been in the growth and expansion of European agriculture. In the crisis of war the European agricultural community had greatly strengthened their control over the country's economy.

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Second World War. Among them, Bildad Kaggia, Paul Joseph Ngei and the "Mau Mau General" Waruhiu Itote.

(14) It would be extremely interesting to compare the figures of the Kenyan Africans who fought in the Second World War with the figures of KAU membership after the war.

(15) Interview.

The effects of the post-war agricultural development programme on the peasantry amounted to a second colonial occupation almost as disruptive as the first.

For the first time ordinary farmers, cultivating maize in their fields encountered administrative interference. Agricultural instructors and the chiefs(16) ordered them to cultivate cassava and millet as security against famine. Three mornings every week, peasant women were compelled to labour on communal terracing or grass-planting campaigns and often they had to neglect their own plots in order to provide unpaid labour on the holdings of the chiefs and settlers.

Squatter cultivation was restricted and the number of sheep and goats they were permitted was drastically reduced, and all males over the age of sixteen were required to work 270 days per annum.

During 1946, these new measures provoked fierce opposition particularly in the Naivasha, Aberdares and Nakuru district council areas(17). This enabled the rural radicals, with the help of the more politically-experienced urban militants to mobilise

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(16) After the war the chiefs were replaced by younger men, willing to follow unquestioningly the orders of District Commissioners and agricultural officers. These chiefs opposed KAU leaders who were struggling to emerge as an alternative indigenous élite.

(17) Cf. Throup. David W., op. cit., pp. 1-14.

popular discontent and to organize a determined and protracted challenge to the chiefs and settlers in 1947 and 1948. Although their campaign failed, it marked the beginning of a new era of more militant opposition to British rule and laid the foundation of a political alliance between the rural poor, on the one hand, and the urban migrant worker, on the other.

They saw their economic deprivation as linked to their political subordination and they hoped to eradicate these two problems when they joined the political struggle of KAU.

In the post-war period in both the rural and urban areas of central Kenya, inhabited mostly by the Gikuyu, African resistance and opposition to British dominance became increasingly militant.

More and more Africans, especially Gikuyu, began to take the KCA oath, known also as "oath of unity" (18) and

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(18) In the early post-war years among the landless Gikuyu settled by the government at Olenguruone, in the Rift Valley, a secret mass oath had been employed to create solidarity. This episode had a profound effect on the Gikuyu leaders who were soon to adopt a similar oath of unity to resolve problems of organization, to raise the commitment of their people, and to bind them together in a common struggle (cf. Rosberg, Carl G.; Nottingham John, op. cit., pp. 243-4; Kanogo, Tabitha, op. cit., esp. pp. 125-161). For a brief study of the traditional Gikuyu oath and the political oath see: Pugliese, Cristiana, "Quel certo giuramento", Plural, Anno I, Luglio-Dicembre 1987, Numero 2, pp. 59-69.

A description of oath-taking ceremonies can be found in the autobiographies written or dictated by Mau Mau

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swore to support the so-called "Mau Mau" movement(19) and to employ eventually non-constitutional means of achieving social, economic and political change.

The word "Mau Mau" appeared for the first time in a report written by the District Commissioner of Nakuru in 1948. He noted that there was a new "politico-religious sect, probably affiliated to the KCA called Maumau and emanating from the Kikuyu reserve"(20).

It is noteworthy that, when used officially for the first time, the term was understood as one word, not two,

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fighters or in those written by politicians. See for instance: Wachanga, Henry Kahinga, The Swords of Kirinyaga, Nairobi, East African Publishing House 1975; Kariuki, Josiah Mwangi, 'Mau Mau' Detainee, London, Oxford University Press 1963, pp. 25-7. On the oath, see also 2.6.

(19) Cf. Ibidem, pp. 139-170.
Some authors, and David Maughan-Brown among them, prefer to place the name Mau Mau in inverted commas because "any unqualified use of the name is implicitly an endorsement of a particular view of the movement - that propagandised by Kenyan whites during the Emergency" (Land, Freedom & Fiction, London, Zed 1985, note 1, p. 16). This position does not take into account the fact that Africans themselves started to call the movement "Mau Mau" without "endorsing the whites' view", but simply because it had become the commonest name to designate the movement. Gakaara, for instance, always uses the term "Mau Mau" without any derogatory connotation. Although I agree that any author writing on Mau Mau should explain the origin of the word, I find the use of inverted commas rather pedantic and that is why I prefer to write simply Mau Mau.

(20) Nakuru District Annual Report, 1948, quoted in Rosberg, Carl G.; Nottingham, John, op. cit., p. 330.

and could easily have been a corruption of the Gikuyu word for oath, as muuma sounds like "mawmaw" in English.

At first the leaders of the movement did not call their organization "Mau Mau"(21). The commonest names used to indicate the movement in songs and oathing ceremonies were: uiguano wa muingi (the Unity of the Community), or simply muingi (Community), Gikuyu na Mumbi (Gikuyu and Mumbi), Muigwithania (The Unifier, also the name of the KCA newspaper), muhimu ("most Important" in Kiswahili)(22).

The word muma, "oath", referred to the "oath of unity", muma wa uiguano, which bound the members of the organization. Since they frequently used it to indicate the movement as a whole, it was not surprising that the colonial authorities took it to be its name.

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(21) The Luo politician Oginga Odinga writes: "Mau Mau became a term of abuse against every Kikuyu who did not volunteer for the government's security forces and give proof of his loyalty to the government. A year after the Emergency was declared Dedan Kimathi wrote a letter from his headquarters in Mount Aberdare to the Nairobi newspaper Habari za Dunia ["World News" in Kiswahili]. There was no such thing as Mau Mau, he said. The poor were the Mau Mau" (Odinga, Oginga, op. cit., p. 120).

(22) Cf. e.g. Barnett, Donald L.; Njama, Karari, op. cit., pp. 51-5).

2.4 The African Book Writers Limited and Gakaara's First Published Story

When Gakaara came back from the war in 1945, he went to live in Karatina town, where he founded, with a group of friends, the African Book Writers Limited. This was registered the following year.

The five directors were Gakaara, Mwaniki Mugweru, Karimu Njung'wa, H. Munene Kanja(23) and J.W. Kirira, whereas the shareholders were Wachira Mukenye, A. Gathunya Mwangi, Robertson Njogu, Murakaru Mathenge and Solomon Monjo. All of them, but Njung'wa who was a Catholic, were educated at Tumutumu CSM school and most of them were teachers in independent schools, who wanted to write and publish their works outside the official channels.

It is important to stress the fact that not all teachers in independent schools were members of the Kikuyu Karing'a Movement or of the Kikuyu Independent School Association or were necessarily anti-Christian or in favour of female circumcision. Some of them were simply employed in independent schools(24).

Gakaara, for instance, who was associating with teachers of independent schools, was not in favour of

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(23) H. Munene Kanja was a trade-unionist. He was the Chairman of the Ex-Soldiers Association in Nyeri town.

(24) Cf. Interview.

female circumcision. In his own words, he was theoretically "neutral"(25), although, in practice, he married a Christian convert of CSM, Shifira Wairire.

Gakaara and Shifira Wairire had met in 1945, when he had started working with ABW Ltd and lived in Karatina, five miles from Tumutumu, where she was a nurse at the CSM hospital. They were married in 1946(26).

From the very beginning of his literary career, writing and publishing were to Gakaara, above all, a job.

He says regarding ABW Ltd: "We did not know anything about literature. When we saw that we could write, we decided to found a company and sell our works. We were interested both in writing and selling. Some of us were also interested in politics"(27).

The members of the company, who were all Gikuyu, wrote and published several booklets, most of them in English. There were two main series, the "Tribal History Pamphlets" and the "Political Pamphlets"(28).

In 1946 Gakaara published his first narrative, a short piece of fiction (fifteen pages) entitled Uhoro wa

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(25) Ibidem.

(26) Gakaara's wife was arrested and detained during the Emergency, see 3.3, 3.5, 3.6 and 3.9. They have four sons and two daughters.

(27) Interview, Appendix 1.

(28) For a complete list of the booklets published by ABW Ltd, see 11.19.1.

Ugurani (The Story of a Marriage), which sold ten thousand copies and became very popular. It has been reprinted several times(29) and remains Gakaara's best seller.

The other work of fiction published by the ABW Ltd, shortly after that of Gakaara's, was Mwaniki Mugweru's Riua Ritanathua (Before the Sun Sets), which Gakaara reprinted in 1951 when he founded his Gakaara Book Service(30).

Of all those who published with ABW Ltd, only Gakaara and Mwaniki Mugweru, went on writing.

The popularity achieved by Gakaara's first booklet encouraged him to become a full time writer. But, for the moment, the profits of the ABW Ltd publications were not enough for him to earn his living and he had to leave Karatina and look for a job in Nakuru town.

2.5 Gakaara's First Political Pamphlet

In 1948 Gakaara moved to Nakuru, in the Rift Valley, to work as a clerk for a British company, the Dalget Company.

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(29) See 4.3 and 11.2. The narrative is based on a real story which one of Gakaara's sisters, Mary Watare, told him (see Interview, Appendix 1).

(30) On Gakaara Book Service, see 2.9.

In that year the conflict between settlers and squatters in the Rift Valley had reached its climax and 160,000 Gikuyu squatters were about to be expelled forcibly by the authorities.

Gakaara was so shocked by the "virtual slavery to which African workers were subjected"(31) that he wrote a political pamphlet in Kiswahili to denounce the situation, Roho ya Kiume na Bidii kwa Mwafrika (The Spirit of Manhood and Perseverance for the African). He published it at his own expense with another pamphlet in Kiswahili, Wanawake Sizu Hizi (Women Today)(32), an indictment of prostitution.

In 1948 Gakaara brought the manuscripts to the Highlands Printers, an Asian-owned printing firm in Nakuru, to have them printed. He then personally sold the pamphlets to booksellers and individuals.

Roho ya Kume na Bidii kwa Mwafrika (The Spirit of Manhood and Perseverance for the African) sold five thousand copies and became very popular. It had good sales in Tanganyika too(33).

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(31) Gakaara wa Wanjau, op. cit., 1988, p. xi.

(32) Unfortunately, I could not find this pamphlet and Gakaara does not have a copy either.

(33) Interview, Appendix 1. On the Gikuyu living in Tanganyika who supported the Gikuyu press, see 2.6.

Gakaara wrote it in Kiswahili because he wanted "the settlers to understand it"(34) and only a few Europeans would have been able to read it in Gikuyu. Far more of them, on the contrary, knew Kiswahili. At the same time he intended "to expose the settlers' lies to the Africans"(35), questioning the legitimacy of colonial power. For sure the Europeans "understood it", as Roho ya Kiume na Bidii kwa Mwafrika (The Spirit of Manhood and Perseverance for the African) would become the main ground for Gakaara's detention in the fifties(36).

At the beginning of 1951 Gakaara moved to Nairobi(37), the centre of militant politics, where he became a political activist. He worked for six months as a clerk for the Marwaha Company and then left his job to become a full-time writer and publisher.

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(34) Interview, Appendix 1.

(35) Ibidem.

(36) By the time Gakaara was arrested in 1952 he had also published the Gikuyu translation of the booklet. The fact that the British authorities always accused him of having written Roho ya Kiume na Bidii kwa Mwafrika (The Spirit of Manhood and Perseverance for the African) and not its Gikuyu translation (it is not even clear whether they even knew he had published it), shows how right Gakaara was in thinking that a pamphlet in Kiswahili would reach the Europeans whereas a pamphlet in Gikuyu would not.

(37) In 1948 Nairobi contained 86,000 Africans of whom over 55,000 were Gikuyu (Barnett, Donald; Njama, Karari, op. cit., p. 41).

His activities in the years immediately preceding the declaration of the State of Emergency, must be read in the light of the growing popularity of the vernacular press in the late forties.

2.6 The Vernacular Press(38)

A decisive factor in fostering political action was the African press, which grew rapidly after 1945.

The Gikuyu were particularly active in this new writing and published a large number of political pamphlets and newspapers in Gikuyu. Most of them were just mimeographed sheets, others were well-printed newspapers appearing on a regular basis, but all these publications helped to build a political awareness that had not existed before.

A precursor of the vernacular newspapers published in the forties, both in terms of language and content, was Muigwithania (The Reconciler). It was started by the

(38) Cf. Abuoga, John Baptist; Mutere, Absalom Aggrey, The History of the Press in Kenya, Nairobi, African Council on Communication Education 1988; Carter, F., "The Kenya Government and the Press 1906-1960", Hadith 2, pp. 243-259; Corfield, F. D., The Origins and Growth of Mau Mau: An Historical Survey 1959/60, London, Colonial Office 1960, esp. Ch. VIII; Kaggia, Bildad, op. cit., esp. Part Two; Rosberg Carl G.; Nottingham John, op. cit., esp. pp. 99-102; Spencer, John ed., op. cit., esp. pp. 78-9.

Kikuyu Central Association in May 1928(39) under the motto "Pray and Work" and Kenyatta, who was the General Secretary of KCA, became its first editor.

The publication of this monthly, which was read even in Tanganyika(40), lapsed in the early thirties, but it was revived in June 1935(41).

The content of the newspaper included long accounts of KCA meetings, letters concerning land and other grievances, practical advice, Gikuyu songs, proverbs, and folktales.

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(39) Between 1920 and 1939, apart from Muigwithania (The Reconciler), other African periodicals had been started: Harry Thuku's newssheet in Kiswahili Tangazo (The Announcement), a Luo paper which lasted for a short while, and Muthithu (The Treasure) a paper in Gikuyu started in 1937 by James Beauttah who was KAU's Chairman of Murang'a Branch. In 1931 he had founded a newspaper in Mombasa for distribution among the coastal Gikuyu, but he only published four issues.

(40) Many Gikuyu were living in Tanganyika and supported the Gikuyu press from the very beginning. Kaggia writes: "The Kikuyu newspapers were read in Tanganyika and Uganda, wherever Kikuyu-speaking people were found (Kaggia, Bildad, op. cit., p. 85). When the State of Emergency was declared in Kenya in 1952, many Mau Mau supporters, mostly Gikuyu, were arrested in Tanganyika. In 1954 a State of Emergency was also declared in the Northern Province of Tanganyika. In his prison diary Gakaara talks about the presence of detainees from Tanganyika in detention camps.

(41) The official circulation of Muigwithania (The Reconciler) was listed in the Kenya Government Blue Book year after year as 250 monthly, but its readership was undoubtedly much larger and many illiterate Africans certainly were aware of its content soon after each monthly issue arrived in the area. By 1933 the newspaper was printing 24 pages monthly, probably on an Asian-owned press (Abuoga, J.B.; Mutere, A. A., op. cit., p. 17).

Muigwithania (The Reconciler) emphasized Gikuyu culture and an early issue encouraged its readers to think of themselves as Gikuyu karing'a, "real Gikuyu", an expression that Gakaara would often use in his writings.

The general aim of the publication was to educate its readers and restore their pride in being Gikuyu and Africans. The similarities with Gakaara's concerns as a writer are not fortuitous. The author was actively involved in politics and was a great admirer of Kenyatta, whose words he often re-echoed in his writings(42).

Kenyatta, just as Gakaara, had always stressed the value of Gikuyu culture and traditions, but also the importance of Western education. He wrote a long article in Muigwithania (The Reconciler) asking his readers to try to attend higher schools, "say, in Europe"(43). In his first political pamphlet Gakaara also expressed his hope that African children would be able to attend "great schools in foreign lands"(44).

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(42) On Gakaara and Kenyatta, see 5.2.

(43) The quotation is from Rosberg and Nottingham's book (op. cit., p. 100), but unfortunately is incomplete and I do not know the year in which Kenyatta published the quoted article.

(44) Gakaara wa Wanjau, op. cit., 1988, p. 243. An extremely free translation of the Gikuyu edition of Roho ya Kiume na Bidii kwa Mwafrika (The Spirit of Manhood and Perseverance for the African) is reported in Appendix 4 of the book.

The newspaper made use of both traditional Gikuyu proverbs and quotations from the Bible(45), which would become a common feature in Gakaara's early fictional writings(46).

The British reaction to Muigwithania (The Reconciler) was at first cautious and then openly hostile(47). In 1940 the government proscribed the KCA for subversive activities and suppressed the newspaper.

Muigwithania (The Reconciler) was not allowed to resume publication after the war, but a new Gikuyu newspaper appeared: the weekly Mumenyereri (The One Who Looks After), edited by Henry Muoria Mwaniki assisted by his second wife Judith Nyamurua, was started in May 1945(48).

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(45) In one issue Kenyatta quoted a biblical passage about strangers having come and taken the land, making the former owners slaves. The Provincial Commissioner ordered that the next issue declare that the passage should not be considered applicable to the situation in Kenya and Kenyatta refused.

(46) On the influence of the Bible on Gakaara, see 7.2, 7.5 and 10.20.

(47) Until 1945 the press laws in Kenya were far from restrictive. In 1906 a Books and Newspapers Ordinance was introduced. It demanded only that newspapers should be registered with the government together with the names and addresses of their proprietors, and that annual returns of their circulation figures should be sent to the Registrar (Carter, F., op. cit., p. 243).

(48) A CMS convert, baptised by Canon Leakey (see 1.4), Muoria was able to attend school only for a short period and can be considered a self-taught man. In the

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The late 1940s saw the beginning of several weeklies and many cyclostyled publications, mostly in Gikuyu. Apart from the well-printed newspapers, which appeared regularly like Mumenyereri (The One Who Looks After) and KAU's newspaper in Kiswahili Sauti ya Mwafrika (The Voice of the African), edited by John D. Kali(49), there were also a large number of mimeographed weeklies.

The Gikuyu politician Bildad Kaggia started his Inooro ria Agikuyu (The Whetstone of the Gikuyu)(50) and

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mid-forties he became KAU's Assistant General Secretary and left his job as railway guard to dedicate himself to political writing. He had learned journalism by correspondence during the Second World War and the course was issued by the same Regent Institute in London which sent the short story course to Gakaara (see 3.5). Muoria's newspaper. Mumenyereri (The One Who Looks After) was initially a monthly, then fortnightly, weekly and finally bi-weekly. It had a circulation of 11,000 and was widely read throughout Gikuyuland. He also wrote a number of political pamphlets and translated a booklet of Christian literature into Gikuyu (A.T. Culwick, Hanaeia, London, Lutterworth Press and United Society for Christian Literature n.d.). When the Emergency was declared in Kenya in 1952 Muoria was in Britain where he had gone to buy an automatic printing machine. He stayed in London where he became a London Transport Underground guard. He still lives in London with his second wife. On Muoria, see also 1.12, 2.8, 2.10 and on his first wife, Judith Nyamurua, 3.2.

(49) During the State of Emergency John D. Kali was detained with Gakaara at Kajiado Detention Camp, Manda Island Detention Camp, Takwa Detention Camp and Hola Rehabilitation Camp, see 3.4 and 3.5.

(50) Bildad Kaggia was the Secretary of KAU. In November 1951 he started a newspaper in Gikuyu, Inooro ria Gikuyu (The Whetstone of Gikuyu), and in October 1952 Afrika Mpya (New Africa), a weekly in Kiswahili. He writes in his autobiography: "The vernacular newspapers were started in order to report our KAU meetings (...) It was decided that

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John Kabogoro Cege(51) Wiyathi (Freedom). A partnership of Victor Murage Wokabi(52) and Mathenge Wacira produced two newspapers: Muthamaki (The Statesman) and Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine (Gikuyu and Mumbi Magazine)(53). There were also Morris Mwai Koigi's(54) two weeklies: Hindi ya Agikuyu (The Time of the Gikuyu) and Mwaraniria (The Conversation Maker), Isaac Gathanju's Wihuge (Stay Alert) and Muramati (The Care Taker).

In late-1951 Gakaara moved to Nairobi and, in February 1952, started publishing his monthly Waigua atia?

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the European-owned newspapers would boycott our meetings. Before this, newspaper reporters, especially from Baraza, used to attend our meetings and report them (...) Some of us decided to fill the gap. I started the two newspapers to report KAU activities. At the same time other vernacular newspapers sprang up. The newspapers helped a great deal to propagandize KAU aims, and in general they expressed African opinion" (Kaggia, Bildad, op. cit., p. 84).

(51) During the State of Emergency John Kabogoro Cege was detained with Gakaara at Kajiado Detention Camp, Manda Island Detention Camp and Takwa Detention Camp, see 3.4 and 3.5.

(52) During the State of Emergency Victor Murage Wokabi was detained with Gakaara at Kajiado Detention Camp, Manda Island Detention Camp and Takwa Detention Camp, see 3.5.

(53) This is the name Gakaara chose for his magazine in the seventies, see 5.5. There is no connection between the two publications. Gakaara simply used the same title because Gikuyu and Mumbi are the ancestors of the Gikuyu people and therefore "the magazine of Gikuyu and Mumbi" would be a magazine containing everything of relevance to the Gikuyu.

(54) During the State of Emergency Morris Mwai Koigi was detained with Gakaara at Manda Island Detention Camp, see 5.5.

(What's the News?). In April 1952 he opened an office in the town centre, at Wanza Mansion in River Road (55).

Waigua atia? (What's the News?) was printed in Nairobi by an Asian-owned printing firm, The Regal Press, and sold five to eight thousand copies.

According to Gakaara, his newspaper became very popular because it was a monthly containing original articles(56). All the other publications, apart from Mumenyereri (The One Who Looks After), were weeklies and consisted mainly, if not entirely, of Gikuyu translations of articles which had appeared in the dailies during the week.

The newspapers were concerned primarily with Kenya's politics. They reported the activities of African leaders, political meetings, the proceedings of the Legislative Council and debates in the House of Commons. Publicity was given to KAU's requests for more land for African

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(55) A few months later, his friend Paul Joseph Ngei, who was KAU's Assistant National Secretary, opened his office near that of Gakaara and started two publications: in March Wasya wa Mukamba (The Voice of the Kamba) in Kikamba and, in August 1952, Uhuru wa Afrika (The Freedom of Africa) in Kiswahili (see Interview, Appendix 1). On Gakaara and Ngei, see also 1.8.

(56) Waigua atia? (What's the News?) contained Gikuyu songs as well. Only in one case did a story appear and Gakaara cannot remember who was the author. It was about a Protestant girl who could not marry her Catholic boyfriend.

settlement, increased African representation in the Legislative Council and improved social services.

The press served to consolidate the support of the politically committed, and won new supporters by articulating the aims of KAU.

As tension grew in 1951 and 1952, the vernacular press became more and more militant and uncompromising. Mumenyereri contained invitations to political meetings in Nairobi, which were camouflaged under the name of "tea parties", and which usually included secret oathing ceremonies.

In the late forties in Central Kenya and other Gikuyu dominated areas, many people, mostly Gikuyu, had taken the first oath of unity(57). By late 1953 other people, particularly radical KAU members in Nairobi, had also taken the second oath, or "platoon oath"(58).

Gakaara took the first oath in February or March 1952 and the second in September the same year(59). On that

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(57) On the "oath of unity", see 2.2,

(58) The second oath had started in mid-1952 and bound those who took it to violent action if necessary. For a description see for instance Barnett, Donald L.; Njama, Karari, op. cit., pp. 130-1; Kariuki, Josiah Mwangi, op. cit., pp. 28-31; Muchai, Karigo, op. cit., pp. 18-21; The guerrilla leaders took a third oath, or "leader's oath". For a description see Barnett, Donald L.; Njama, Karari, op. cit., pp. 191-2.

(59) See also 3.7.

occasion he dropped his Christian name, Jonah Johana, and started using only his Gikuyu name, Gakaara.

The political leaders believed that through the oath they could achieve committed mass support. The employment of violence played little part in their plans and Gakaara has always stressed the difference between the group of "educated Mau Mau" he belonged to and the actual Mau Mau guerrillas, most of them illiterate, who fought in the forest(60). But the use of the secret oath and the increasing radicalization and conspiratorial character of the politics that followed created insuperable problems for constitutional nationalism(61).

2.7 The Printers

Gakaara, just as the other publishers of vernacular newspapers and pamphlets, did not own any printing

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(60) Cf. Interview. Even in detention Gakaara never associated with the Mau Mau fighters who were in his same camp, but preferred the company of "educated people".

(61) KAU was comprised of people and leaders with a fairly wide range of interests and political views. The former KCA members constituted the more radical element in KAU. Though the aims of KAU and KCA regarding land, wages, education, the colour-bar and African political predominance were the same, the KCA was prepared to countenance revolutionary means if the peaceful, constitutional efforts of KAU's more moderate leadership failed (cf. Barnett, Donald; Njama, Karari, op. cit., pp. 39-42; Rosberg, Carl G.,; Nottingham, John, op. cit., pp. 264-5).

equipment and he had to take his booklets to The Regal Press to print them(62).

Though some Africans had learned to run printing equipment by helping to edit missionary publications, they had no control over any presses or access to printers sympathetic to their protest until after the First World War.

Since Africans could not afford to buy printing equipment and European printers would not print African newspapers, they had to rely on the presses owned by supportive Indian radicals, who were trying to form a united non-European front against the colonial government(63).

Although the Indians had started helping the African press after the First World War, they became particularly active in the forties with the growth and diffusion of vernacular publications.

The importance of those Asians in the newspaper business, whose machines produced the African vernacular

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(62) Interview, Appendix 1.

(63) The leading Gikuyu politician James Beauttah writes: "In 1937 I started a real newspaper called Muthithu (The Treasure). If it had not been for Mr Vidyarthi of the Colonial Times, I could never have produced this paper. We could not afford a printing press and he did all our composing and printing for us, I shall always be grateful to him for what he did. He did not get any financial reward, he just wanted Africans to have a chance to speak out" (Spencer, John ed., op. cit., p. 79).

papers, has usually been overlooked. But, in the early fifties, the authorities became aware of it and took a series of measures against the Asian printers.

The government tried to discourage printers from printing African newspapers by giving them heavier sentences than the editors in the sedition cases. For example V. G. Patel (who later on sold his printing equipment to Nuoria) went to jail for producing Mumenyereri (The One Who Looks After) and G. L. Vidyarthi for printing Sauti ya Mwafrika (The Voice of the African)(64).

In 1950 the government attempted to restrain the more extreme newspapers by amending the penal code to enable courts to confiscate the presses of printers accused of sedition.

The Printing Presses (Temporary Provision) Ordinance empowered the Registar of printing presses to cancel or refuse a licence to a printer if he thought the press would be used for illegal publications or for printing documents "prejudicial to or incompatible with peace or good order"(65).

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(64) Beauttah is the only author who acknowledges the help of Indian printers and also of those members of the East African Indian National Congress who assisted KAU with funds and advice, but he admits that usually African leaders did not trust Indians: "To be honest, I would have to say that Pio Pinto was the only Asian any of us had real confidence in" (op. cit., pp. 78-9). We shall see later on in this study that Pinto helped Gakaara after his release (see 4.2). (who had been detained with Gakaara at Manda Island Detention Camp and Takwa Detention Camp)

(65) Carter, F., op. cit., p. 251.

The ordinance served both to reduce the number of newspapers in circulation, and to make printers act as censors of the newspapers they printed. This had the effect of driving the printers of some newspapers to use duplicators, fearing that they might be implicated in a sedition case. But it did not result in any moderation of the press, nor did it prevent new Gikuyu newspapers from being started.

The government had feared that the measure might be criticized in Britain. But a state of emergency was declared in Kenya in October 1952, and the Printing Presses Ordinance was accepted in the House of Commons as a necessary measure in abnormal circumstances. It was originally enacted for one year, but it remained in force until the end of the Emergency in 1960(66).

Only after independence did Africans start running their own presses. That of Gakaara would be one of the first printing business owned by an African in Kenya(67).

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(66) Cf. Carter, F. op. cit., p. 251.

(67) See 5.4.

2.8 The Political Pamphlets(68)

Several editors of vernacular newspapers were also producing political pamphlets in Gikuyu, mainly centred on the problem of land alienation in Gikuyuland. The most important publishing house was that of Henry Muoria Mwanika's, Mumenyereri Press.

In the years immediately preceding the declaration of the State of Emergency a number of editors and printers were prosecuted on charges of sedition(69) for publishing seditious articles in the vernacular newspapers and also

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(68) Unfortunately, there are no studies on Gikuyu political pamphlets and there is not even a bibliography.

(69) The Kenya sedition law was based upon the English law. A charge of sedition could be brought against a publication which promoted ill will and hostility between different classes of the population in the colony. However, it was necessary to prove that such a result was intended by the writer.

It was particularly difficult to prove seditious intent in the vernacular press owing to the allegorical nature of the language in which the newspapers were written. Further difficulty was caused by the fact that the magistrate had usually to rely upon interpreters for the particular meanings of words which were frequently disputed (Carter, F., op. cit, p. 248).

The Government Commissioner, F.D. Corfield, writes in his report on the origins of the Mau Mau movement: "Despite the torrent of subversion gushing from the vernacular press, on only five occasions did it prove possible to institute legal proceedings for seditious publication under the Penal Code during the five years immediately preceding the declaration of the Emergency" (Corfield, F.D., op. cit., p. 198).

The first case against the African owned press was brought in 1947, when successful action for criminal libel was taken against Henry Muoria, the editor of Mumenyereri (The One Who Looks After).

for publishing political pamphlets. In June 1950, for instance, "the two editors of Hindi ya Gikuyu (The Time of the Gikuyu) pleaded guilty to three charges of sedition. [V.H. Wokabi and J.C. Kamau] The two accused had also published a pamphlet which said that Europeans were forcing Africans to be their slaves, and that they robbed them of their land(70)".

2.9 Gakaara Book Service: Nairobi 1952

Apart from editing his magazine Waigua atia? (What's the News?), Gakaara was also very active as a writer and publisher.

In September 1951 he brought out a reprint of his first work of fiction Uhoro wa Ugurani (The Story of a Marriage)(71) with the new title Ngwenda Unjurage (I Want You to Kill Me), which, like the first edition, sold extremely well, around five thousand copies. He also published three booklets of fiction, Ihu ni Riau? (Who is Responsible for Her Pregnancy?), O Kirima Ngagua (To

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(70) Carter, F., op. cit., p. 247. The author does not give any other reference to the booklet. It would have been interesting to know the title and the author of the pamphlet, as its content seems to be similar to that of Gakaara's Mageria Nomo Mahota (Make an Attempt in Order to Succeed).

(71) See 2.4.

Whatever Destination) and Marebeta Ikumi ma Wendo (Ten Love Songs)(72). He also produced three general works, Kienyu kia Ngai Kirima-ini gia Tumutumu (The Warrior of God on Tumutumu Hill) on land ownership in Gikuyuland, and Kiguni gia Twana (Advice for Children), on the importance of education, and Murata wa Mwene (The Owner's Friend). But, since his publishing house was not yet registered, Gakaara had the above works printed and then he distributed them personally.

In February 1952, when his Gakaara Book Service was finally registered, Gakaara first concentrated on the monthly Waigua atia? (What's the News?), then, starting from April, he produced a number of booklets, including works of fiction, which, unfortunately, are no longer available(73).

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(72) In 1972 Gakaara enlarged Marebeta Ikumi ma Wendo (Ten Love Poems), adding six new poems, and published the booklet under the new title Mawendo Mithemba 16 (16 Ways of Loving) in 1972 (see Chapter Five, section 4).

(73) In 1952 Gakaara brought out as Gakaara Book Service the titles he had produced in 1951: Ngwenda Unjurage (I Want You to Kill Me), Ihu ni Riau? (Who is Responsible for Her Pregnancy?), O Kirima Ngagua (To Whatever Destination) and Marebeta Ikumi ma Wendo (Ten Love Songs), Kienyu kia Ngai Kirima-ini gia Tumutumu (The Warrior of God on Tumutumu Hill), Kiguni gia Twana (Advice for Children), and Murata wa Mwene (The Owner's Friend). As we shall see later on in this study, Gakaara also published his Gikuyu translation of Roho ya Kiume na Bidii kwa Mwafrika (The Spirit of Manhood and Perseverance for the African) with the title Mageria Nomo Mahota (Make an Attempt in order to Succeed), a leaflet containing Witikio ya Gikuyu na Mumbi (The Creed of Gikuyu and Mumbi) and a collection of

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The first publication of Gakaara Book Service was the Gikuyu translation of Roho ya Kiume na Bidii kwa Mwafrika (The Spirit of Manhood and Perseverance for the African), Mageria No Mo Mahota (Make an Attempt in Order to Succeed)(74), which, with its eight thousand copies, sold even better than the original in Kiswahili.

Gakaara composed a Creed, Witikio wa Gikuyu na Mumbi (The Creed of Gikuyu and Mumbi), modelled on the Christian

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political songs, Nyimbo cia Gikuyu na Mumbi (Songs of Gikuyu and Mumbi).

He brought out several works written by other authors. He published the following political pamphlets: Wiyathi wa Andu Airu (Freedom for Black People) by Mwaniki Mugweru, a reprint of Kamuingi Koyaga Ndiri (A Small Group of People Lift the Heavy Mortar) by the same author (see 1.12), and two other political pamphlets of which he cannot remember the authors, Kenya ni Yakwa (Kenya Is Mine), Miikarire ya Thikwota (How Squatters Live). He also brought out the following works of fiction: Mwari Mweru ni Magambo (A Beautiful Daughter is Trouble) by Githuku, who was working with the Kenya Information Office, and Riua Ritanathua (Before the Sun Sets) by Mwaniki Mugweru (on Mugweru, see also 1.12, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.7).

(74) Gakaara decided to change the title of the Gikuyu translation because, by that time, Henry Mwaniki Muoria, the editor of Mumenyereri (The One Who Looks After) had published a well-known pamphlet with a similar title Ngoro ya Ugikuyu Ni ya Gutoria (The Heart/Spirit of the Gikuyu Is for Winning).

Mageria No Mo Mahota is a very common Gikuyu proverb which means "Success Comes with Repeated Effort". The title of Gakaara's booklet was freely translated "Make an Attempt in Order to Succeed" in the English translation contained in Appendix 4 of Mau Mau Author in Detention. To avoid confusion, I have adopted the same title.

It would have been interesting to compare the Swahili original with the Gikuyu translation, but I could not find a copy of Roho ya Kiume na Bidii kwa Mwafrika (The Spirit of Manhood and Perseverance for the African) and Gakaara does not have a copy either.

Creed, which was usually recited after the singing of the songs of protest at the beginning or end of political meetings(75). It was published in August 1952 on a page-sized sheet of cardboard folded in two. It sold a record twenty thousand copies, probably because it was rather inexpensive and was very popular among the Gikuyu who had taken the "oath of unity". The Creed goes as follows:

> "I believe in God the Almighty, Creator of Heaven and Earth and I also believe in Gikuyu and Mumbi, our ancestors, to whom He bequeathed this land and to the same people who were enslaved during the time of Cege(76) and Waiyaki(77) by the

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(75) Only Kaggia and Ogot refer to the Creed. Kaggia writes that "besides newspapers (...) there were many song-books and tracts, such as Witiki [sic] (Faith), all of which were spreading the same message" (Kaggia, Bildad, op. cit., p. 111). Ogot remarks that "there was a parodied creed on the same lines of the hymns which was supposed to be said by every Gikuyu after the singing of the hymns" and he gives an English translation (Ogot, Bethwell A., "Politics, Culture and Music in Central Kenya, a Study of Mau Mau Hymns 1951-1956", Kenya Historical Review: Special Issue on Some Perspectives on the Mau Mau Movement, Vol. 5, No. 2, p. 9).

(76) Cege wa Kibiru was the most famous Gikuyu medicineman and seer. He had prophesied the arrival of armed white people and that of the railway. Kinuthia Mugia wrote a book on him: Urathi wa Cege wa Kibiru (The Prophecy of Cege wa Kibiru), Nairobi, Kenya Literature Bureau 1979. Kenyatta and Muriuki also write briefly about Cege, see: Kenyatta, Jomo, Facing Mount Kenya, London, Secker & Warburg 1938 (London Heinemann 1979), pp. 41-4; Muriuki, Godfrey, A History of the Kikuyu: 1500-1900, Nairobi, Oxford University Press 1974, pp. 137-8.

(77) Waiyaki wa Hinga was a Gikuyu muthamaki at the end of the last century. The muthamaki was the leader of the

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colonialists.

They were deprived of freedom and their lands and they were left helpless. Their children's

warriors' council in a territorial unit and acted as the chief spokesman for the territorial warriors. Waiyaki made treaties with the IBEAC officials who believed him to be the "paramount chief of the Gikuyu". But, actually, he had not the power to make any treaty of his own and could not control the warriors. The British did not realize their mistake and, when the Gikuyu attacked them, they accused Waiyaki of treachery and arrested him. He was deported and died on his way to the coast (cf. Muriuki, Godfrey, op. cit., pp. 146-52; Kenyatta, Jomo, op. cit., pp. 46-7).

The historical figure of Waiyaki has been further interpreted and he has became a "hero who had been killed by the British invaders" and the "symbol of the nationalistic struggle", not only in the fifties when Gakaara published the Creed, but also after independence. This is mostly due to the works of Ngugi wa Thiong'o and in particular A Grain of Wheat, where he writes referring to Waiyaki's death: "Then nobody noticed it; but looking back we can see that Waiyaki's blood contained within it a seed, a grain, which gave birth to a political party whose main strength thereafter sprang from a bond with the soil" (A Grain of Wheat, London, Heinemann 1968, 1982 edition, p. 13). Karega in Petals of Blood, by the same author, thinks about the brave African leaders and lists Waiyaki among them (Petals of Blood, London, Heinemann 1977, p. 237). Ngugi also talks about Waiyaki in his prison diary Detained: a Writer's Prison Diary (London, Heinemann 1981, e.g. pp. 45-6). Cook and Okenimpke in their study of Ngugi's works write in the index, under the name Waiyaki: "Early Kenyan Nationalist" (Cook, David; Okenimpke, Michael, op. cit., p. 249). Only the Kenyan historian William R. Ochieng' in his "Autobiography in Kenyan History" (Ufahamu, 14, 2, 1985, pp. 80-101) criticizes Ngugi for presenting Waiyaki as "the leading figure in the people's patriotic resistence against the British invasion and occupation of southern Gikuyuland" (Ochieng' does not give a page reference for this quotation from Ngugi). Ochieng'describes Waiyaki as: "a collaborator who entered into blood brotherhood with Lord Lugard and donated land on which the Church of Torch stands today at Togoto" (Ibidem, p. 97).

Gakaara reinforces the "legend of Waiyaki" in his recent textbook Thooma Giigikuyu Kiega: Ibuku ria Gatatu "B" (Learn Good Gikuyu: Book Three "B"), Karatina, Gakaara Press 1988), where he writes that: "The first brave Gikuyu warrior who fought the colonialists in the year 1892 was Waiyaki wa Hinga of Kiambu" (p. 13).

children opened their eyes, stood up and brought their parents back to leadership.

I also believe in the Holy Ceremonies of Gikuyu and Mumbi and I believe in the leadership of Kenyatta and Mbiyu(78) and in the unity of Mwangi and Irungu ruling generations(79) and in the nine full Gikuyu clans(80) and in the Gikuyu nation that will last forever.

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(78) Peter Mbiyu Koinange was a leading Gikuyu politician and the founder of the Kenya African Union (KAU) in 1944. He was the KAU representative in London in 1951-9 during the State of Emergency. Koinange was Kenyatta's closest political associate.

(79) Uiguano wa Mwangi na Irungu: literally "the unity of Mwangi and Irungu". In the revised edition of the Creed, published in September 1989, Gakaara writes more precisely: Mariika meeri ma wathani wa Mwangi na Irungu, "the two ruling generations of Mwangi and Irungu". Mwangi and Irungu (or Maina) "were the tribal moieties charged with the responsibility of running the tribal affairs at any given time and whose term of office began with the conspicuous and distinctive handing over ceremony, the ituika. This took place every thirty or forty years, during which one generation handed over to its successor the reins of power to conduct the political, judicial and religious functions" (Muriuki, Godfrey, op. cit., p. 117). When Gakaara wrote the Creed, the Mwangi generation had handed over to the Irungu generation. On the Gikuyu age class system, see also Lambert, H.E., Kikuyu Social and Political Institutions, London, Oxford University Press 1956 and on the age-class system in general: Bernardi, Bernardo, Age-Class Systems: Social Institutions Based on Age, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1985 (1st publ. in Italian I sistemi delle classi d'età, Torino, Loescher 1984). Unfortunately, apart from Muriuki's and Lambert's works, there are no studies of the complex Gikuyu age-system, which, in my view, deserves particular attention. Such studies would be of great help for an analysis of the rise of Mau Mau which coincided with the shift of power from the Mwangi to the Irungu generation. As the ethnologist Bernardo Bernardi remarked in a private conversation, a possible link between the Mau Mau movement (and its recruitment) and the new ruling generation has never been singled out by scholars.

(80) In Gikuyu kenda muiyurũ, "nine full", means "ten".

God, let it be so, Amen! God let it be so!"(81).

The Witikio wa Gikuyu na Mumbi (The Creed of Gikuyu and Mumbi) and Roho ya Kiume na Bidii kwa Mwafrika (The Spirit of Manhood and Perseverance for the African), would constitute the main grounds for Gakaara's detention during the State of Emergency.

2.10 The Hymn Books

The vernacular newspapers and the political pamphlets were not the only publications. The popular hymn books in Gikuyu, or nyimbo, had also started circulating, carrying the same political message of African grievances and aspirations.

The political leaders, and in particular the militant former KCA politicians now working with KAU, "were quick

(81) The above is my translation of the Gikuyu text reported in the Gikuyu edition of Gakaara's prison diary Mwandiki wa Mau Mau Ithaamirio-ini, Nairobi, Heinemann 1983, p. 187. A "free English translation", by the translator's own admission, is reported in the English translation of the diary (op. cit., p. 250). In the diary Gakaara writes that he published "introductory comments on the card of the Creed" (Ibidem, p. 189) and it is not clear why the editor decided not to publish the whole leaflet. Gakaara's comments would have been interesting because the Creed appears in the diary without any explanation or foot-notes, and not even the date of publication is reported (for comments on the lack of editing of Gakaara's diary, see 3.3). Gakaara published again the Creed in September 1989, slightly modifying the original text.

to realise the very great opportunity which the Kikuyu love of hymn singing offered for propaganda purposes"(82).

In the first place the political message in "hymn" form and set to well-known Church tunes was easily learned by heart and provided a most effective method of spreading the political messages.

In order to reach as many people as possible the songs had first to be published and distributed(83). The hymns were learned by heart, by those who could read them, and then were taught to others and soon became well known to the illiterate Gikuyu. This was very important, for there were many who could not be reached by the vernacular newspapers, although they were usually read in public.

The political songs could safely be sung in the presence of all but a very few Europeans, since the vast majority could not understand a word of Gikuyu. L.S.B. Leakey(84) writes: "if they heard a large, or a small, group singing to the tune of 'Onward Christian Soldiers', 'Abide with Me', or any other well known hymn, they were hardly likely to suspect that propaganda against

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(82) Leakey, L.S.B., Defeating Mau Mau, London, Methuen 1954, p. 53.

(83) Kaggia writes: "Active groups of young men and women played important roles in our organization and recruitment. These were the propagandists who went round telling people about the aims of the movement and selling our literature" (Kaggia, Bildad, op. cit., p. 111).

(84) On Leakey and his family, see 1.4.

themselves was going on under their very noses. They would be more likely to consider that a Christian revival was on its way"(85).

Not only were the songs set to the tunes of Christian hymns, but they also used Biblical analogies to convey their message. Thus, for instance, Jomo Kenyatta was referred to as "the shepherd of the flock" and became an instrument of Jehovah for the salvation of the Africans(86).

The hymn books contained frequent references to KAU, but they never appeared as official KAU publications. Since the texts often encouraged the expulsion of the Europeans and the KAU leaders pledged to use nothing but constitutional means, the hymns could not be officially linked with KAU. Nonetheless, the hymn books were distributed through KAU head office and its branches, and the hymns were regularly sung at KAU meetings in Gikuyuland before the speakers arrived and in conclusion to the meetings.

There are no comprehensive studies of the so-called "hymn books", and of Mau Mau songs in general. The only

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(85) Ibidem, p. 54.

(86) There are many examples of Biblical analogies in the political songs, see e.g."Remember when Jomo was told by Jehovah/That he would go abroad to get salvation for our children" (quoted in Ogot, Bethwell A., op . cit., p. 3).

specific titles are an essay by Bethwell A. Ogot(87) and a collection of songs translated into English and edited by Maina wa Kinyatti(88). The former, far from being "a study

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(87) Ogot, Bethwell A. op. cit., 1977.

(88) Maina wa Kinyatti, Thunder from the Mountains: Mau Mau Patriotic Songs, London, Zed Press 1980.

Bethwell A. Ogot and Maina wa Kinyatti represent two groups of Kenyan scholars who give two opposite interpretations of the Mau Mau movement. Ogot (like Kipkorir and Kanogo) believes that Mau Mau was simply a "Gikuyu affair" and uses the songs as evidence, arguing that they do not show any nationalist ideology. In contrast, Kinyatti (like Ngugi) defines the the Mau Mau movement as "the peak of African nationalism in Kenya" (this is the title of the controversial essay he published in the Kenya Historical Review: Special Issue on Some Perspectives on the Mau Mau Movement, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 287-311) and uses the songs to further his thesis.

A valuable discussion of Mau Mau historiography can be found in: Furedi, Frank, The Mau Mau War in Perspective, London, Zed 1989. I agree with the author that, although Mau Mau was not a tribalist movement, it was not an anti-imperialist nationalistic movement as Kinyatti argues. Furedi writes: "Unfortunately his [Kinyatti's] arguments are a mirror-image of the culturalist/Kikuyu nationalist thesis (...). Whereas they see only continuity of culture, Kinyatti depicts Mau Mau as the culmination of resistance movements stretching back to the nineteenth century, arguing that: 'It is evident that resistance movements since the 19th century progressed from lower to higher levels of organization and political awareness culminating in the Mau Mau armed confrontation'. If Mau Mau is simply more of the same, the distinct character of the movement is lost. And the act of 'resistance' abstracted from specific social experience does not on its own make a movement nationalist or anti-imperialist. In the end Kinyatti cannot sustain his argument except by pointing to statements and songs of Mau Mau teachers" (p. 142). I would add "to his interpretation (and translation) of statements and songs", although, by saying that, I do not mean to diminish the importance of Kinyatti's collection of Mau Mau songs, which is the only existing one in English.

The weakness of Kinyatti's historical interpretation of Mau Mau has been pointed to by many scholars in Kenyan

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of Mau Mau hymns", contains a poor English translation of some stanzas loosely grouped by subject; the latter has the merit of being the first collection of Mau Mau songs published in English, but, unfortunately, it does not include the Gikuyu originals and it is not supported by an adequate introduction. Although Kinyatti writes extensively about the political consciousness underlying the songs and the Mau Mau struggle in general, in his brief introduction he does not even explain that the songs had ever been published(89).

Strangely enough, the most useful data on hymn books are contained in a general work written by a "white

history; what I can say, from a literary point of view, is that Kinyatti's evidence is based on his own translation of the songs, rather than on the content of the songs themselves. In the appendix "The Development of New Words and Concepts" he explains the criteria on which his translations are based; according to him, during Mau Mau, "old words were used with new meanings to represent the birth of a new nation. They also reflected qualitative changes in our anti-colonial culture" (p. 113). Kinyatti argues that thukumu, for instance, changed from its original meaning, "stranger", to mean "imperialist" (p. 116). Clearly, it is very difficult to demonstrate how the people involved in the struggle understood certain words and this is not the appropriate place to discuss the problem. I mention it because Kinyatti edited Gakaara's prison diary and, although he did not translate it, the English translation reflects his views on "new words and concepts". Either Kinyatti influenced the English translation, or the translator shared his ideas, or both (see also 3.3).

(89) He only thanks in the acknowledgements "Kinuthia wa Mugia, Muthee wa Cheche, Gakaara wa Wanjau, J.M. Kariuki, Karari wa Njama and Mohamed Mathu, who wrote, edited and compiled some of these songs" (Maina wa Kinyatti, op. cit., acknowledgements, p. viii).

colonialist", L.S.B. Leakey, and significantly entitled Defeating Mau Mau(90). In fact, although he dedicates only a few pages to hymn books, his study is the more valuable in so much as he is the only scholar who actually describes the booklets, gives some bibliographical details and some biographical information on their authors.

As far as primary sources are concerned, the most important contribution is that of Gakaara, who, in 1989, published a collection of Mau Mau songs, Nyimbo cia Mau Mau (Mau Mau Songs). This work fills a great gap and is extremely useful to the scholar who wants to study the Gikuyu originals and has no access to the hymn books published in the early fifties since nowadays those four original collections are almost impossible to find.

The songs did not have a single author, although Kinuthia Mugia seems to have been one of the chief authors(91). The compilers were Kinuthia Mugia, Muthee Cheche(92), Gakaara and Kibuthu Kuiyaki and the publishers

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(90) Leakey, L.S.B. op. cit., 1954.

(91) Leakey writes that "before they [the songs] were printed he [Kinuthia Mugia] used to go about singing them rather like a bard in olden days" (L.S.B. Leakey, op. cit., p. 55, note 2).

(92) L.S.B. Leakey writes that Kinuthia Mugia was a "leading Mau Mau organiser" and Cheche Muthee a "prominent Mau Mau leader", op. cit., p. 55 and p. 62. He does not mention either Kuiyaki's or Gakaara's name, although he analyses several songs contained in the hymn books edited by them.

Gakaara's Gakaara Book Service and Muoria's Mumenyereri Press(93).

The first hymn book to be published was the undated booklet compiled and edited by Kinuthia Mugia and published by Mumenyereri Press either in October or November 1951. The foreword was written by Henry Mwaniki Muoria(94).

Like the first, the next book is undated. It was edited by Muthee Cheche, who was said "to have composed many of the 'hymns' himself and who certainly often sang them. It was on sale through Kiburi House, the headquarters of the Nairobi branch of KAU"(95).

By August 1952 the government had taken very little notice of the above hymn books as political propaganda, and no attempt had been made to ban them. Therefore, almost simultaneously, on 15th and 20th 1952 respectively, two new hymn books were published(96).

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(93) On Muoria, see 2.6, 2.8 and 2.9.

(94) Henry Muoria said that the title of Mugia's booklet was Nyimbo cia Kwarahura Ngoro (Songs to Awake the Heart), but Gakaara said that Nyimbo cia Kwarahura (Awakening Songs) was the title of the collection edited by Kuyiaki. Unfortunately I could not find a copy of Kuyiaki's booklet and although I have a copy of Mugia's collection, the front page is missing and thus I do not know the title.

(95) Leakey, L.S.B., op. cit., p. 62. I could not find a copy of Cheche's collection and I do not know the title.

(96) I do not know the publisher of the second hymn book.

The first to appear, Nyimbo cia Gikuyu na Mumbi (Songs of Gikuyu and Mumbi) was compiled by Gakaara and published by Gakaara Book Service(97).

Gakaara says: "I started collecting and writing songs. Some people thought that I was good at that, so they were bringing songs or they were sending them to me and I took them to the Regal Printers to publish them because I had no printing facilities, I only had a small office. But I carried on... until that time in October 1952 when we were arrested"(98).

The last hymn book to appear, commonly known as the "grey book", was published on the 20th August and edited by Kibuthu Kuiyaki(99).

All these hymn books figured in the Kapenguria trial where KAU leaders were tried on the charge of being leaders of Mau Mau. The prosecution mostly, if not

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(97) I do not have copies of the two hymn books published in August 1952 and Gakaara does not have a copy of his booklet either. For their content we have to rely on the information given by L.S.B. Leakey (op. cit., pp. 67-74) and Bethwell A. Ogot (op. cit). Gakaara told me that "3/4 of the songs originally published in Nyimbo cia Gikuyu na Mumbi [The Songs of Gikuyu na Mumbi]" were included in the collection Nyimbo cia Mau Mau" (Mau Mau Songs, Karatina, Gakaara Press 1989), Interview, Appendix 1.

(98) Ibidem.

(99) Gakaara said it was entitled Nyimbo cia Kwarahura (Awakening Songs), cf. note 94.

entirely, relied on hymn books for information about the aims and objectives of Mau Mau(100).

(100) Cf. Slater, Montagu, The Trial of Jomo Kenyatta, London, Secker & Warburg 1955 (Nairobi, Heinemann 1975). The book is based on the full transcript of the evidence, speeches and summing-up of the case. Discussion of the hymn books appears almost in every section.

3. THE STATE OF EMERGENCY:

OCTOBER 1952 - JANUARY 1960

3.1 Historical Introduction(1)

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(1) This introduction is mainly focused on the vernacular press because, when the State of Emergency was declared in Kenya in October 1952, Gakaara was arrested for his activities as a writer and a publisher. Therefore, this introduction does not take into account all the repercussions of the declaration of the State of Emergency. For a comprehensive study of the Mau Mau movement, I refer to specific texts on the subject. Arguably, the most valuable works are: Rosberg, Carl G.; Nottingham, John, op. cit., Barnett, Donald L.; Njama, Karari, op. cit., Berman, Bruce; Lonsdale, John, Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya & Africa. Book Two: Conflict & Ethnicity, London, James Currey 1992, Buijtenhuijs, Robert, Mau Mau Twenty Years After, Mouton, The Hague 1973 (with a foreword by Ali A. Mazrui), Furedi, Frank, op. cit., Throup, David W., op. cit.; as a reference work see Venys, Ladislav, A History of the Mau Mau Movement in Kenya, Prague, Charles University 1970, which contains a very useful comparison of figures and data appearing in colonial and government publications on Mau Mau; for the "colonial" view of Mau Mau, see Carothers, J.C., The Psychology of Mau Mau, Nairobi, Government Printer 1954, Corfield, F.D., op. cit., Leakey, L.S.B, op. cit., 1954. Unfortunately, there is no complete and updated bibliography on Mau Mau; a useful bibliography is that compiled by Marshall S. Clough and A. Jackson Kennell, A Bibliography of Mau Mau, Syllabus, 1975.

The only specific study of fictional writings (and also several autobiographical writings) on Mau Mau is D. Maughan-Brown's (op. cit.). For a study of Kenyan autobiographical writings and, among them, those written or dictated by Mau Mau fighters, see also: Pugliese, Cristiana, The Life-Story in Kenya, unpublished dissertation, University of Rome, 1985. Both studies were written before Gakaara's diary appeared in the English translation. Several autobiographies by Mau Mau fighters and fictional writings on Mau Mau are also discussed in Buijtenhuijs, Robert, op. cit. pp. 87-111. Both William R. Ochieng's "Autobiography in Kenyan History" (op. cit., 1985) and P. Godfrey Okot's critique of it, "Autobiography in Kenyan History: A Critique" (Ufahamu, 14, 2, 1985, pp.

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During 1951 and early 1952 the spreading of the oath, KAU mass meetings in Central Kenya and the first episodes of violence, arson and cattle maiming, led the settlers' leaders to press for a State of Emergency, but the administration at first refused, looking on Mau Mau as a fanatical religious cult rather than a subversive political movement.

On 7 October 1952 Senior Chief Waruhiu, the leading government spokesman in Gikuyuland and one of the most prominent Christian leaders in the Kiambu area, was assassinated. It was the first direct and serious challenge to the authority of the colonial state and the settlers' demands resulted in the official declaration of an emergency.

A State of Emergency was signed by the Governor, Sir Evelyn Baring, on 20 October 1952 and declared in a broadcast the following day.

Kenyatta and other KAU leaders were immediately arrested. African newspapers were proscribed, all public meetings were banned and almost all independent schools closed down. Thousands of Africans, predominantly Gikuyu, Embu and Meru, were arrested and consequently detained or

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102-112), in spite of their titles, are hardly discussions of Kenyan autobiographical writings. The former contains a few interesting points, but is, in the main, an apologia for the Luo politician Tom Mboya, whereas the latter is mostly a virulent personal attack on Ochieng' and his historical approach.

imprisoned. Gikuyu squatters on European farms were evicted to the overcrowded village units(2) and all Gikuyu, Embu and Meru were forcibly registered.

Instead of attempting to remove the African frustration that had led to the emergence of the movement and support the KAU moderate wing, the actions of the government aggravated the discontent and thousands of Gikuyu, Embu and Meru began to support the Mau Mau movement. Around 155,000 insurgents withdrew to the forests of Central Kenya, organizing the armed struggle. By the end of 1952 Mau Mau had become an open revolt.

The Emergency regulations gave the government powers to suppress newspapers considered prejudicial to public order. The government proscribed all African-owned news-sheets and broad-sheets(3). Twelve newspapers were suppressed in October of that year. Two of these were in

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(2) Between 1953 and 1955, hundreds of thousands of Gikuyu homesteads that had been scattered over the countryside were destroyed for security reasons, and 950,000 people were moved into new villages. A major redistribution of land boundaries became a central issue in the government's policy. Villages could be more easily controlled than the scattered huts they replaced and also provide homes for the landless squatters from the Central Highlands. Lastly, they could become the centre for the reconstruction of Gikuyu society around the new élite, the loyalists (cf. Rosberg, Carl G.; Nottingham, John, op. cit., pp. 303-8).

(3) Baraza (The Assembly) and Jicho (The Eye), both in Kiswahili, became the only newspapers catering for Africans and in fact, when Gakaara was in detention, he sent Baraza his short story for publication, see 3.5.

Kiswahili, (one was Sauti ya Mwafrika, The Voice of the African, the organ of the KAU), one was in Embu (Mugambo wa Muembu, The Voice of the Embu, edited by Griggory Mbiti), one in Kikamba (Wasya wa Mukamba, The Voice of the Kamba, edited by Paul Joseph Ngei), and the remaining eight were in Gikuyu(4). Twenty-nine leaflets and pamphlets were also suppressed all of which were in Gikuyu, Gakaara's pamphlet Hageria Nomo Hahota (Make an Attempt in Order to Succeed) among them. The remaining vernacular newspapers were banned early in 1953.

The government attempted to ensure that all the newspapers appearing in the colony were licensed and the circulation of vernacular newspapers in the areas affected by the Emergency in Central Kenya was entirely forbidden(5). The authorities attempted to fill the gap

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(4) Gakaara's Waigua atia? (What's the News?) was probably among the first newspapers to be banned, but I do not know for sure because I could not find a list of the publications suppressed in 1952.

(5) The government took further measures to strengthen its control over the press in 1953 when the Emergency (Publications) Regulations were introduced. These were designed to prevent evasion of the Printing Presses Ordinance. Some vernacular newspapers had begun to be produced on duplicating machines. The new regulation made the production on a duplicating machine of a newspaper in Gikuyu, Embu or Meru an offence which carried a sentence of a fine of up to 10,000/- or imprisonment for up to two years, or both (Cf. Carter, F., op. cit., p. 252).

they had created by publishing and sponsoring vernacular newspapers, which never became very popular.

3.2 Operation "Jock Scott" and Gakaara's Arrest

During the night of 20 October 1952 the police put into action the first operation of the Emergency, the so-called "Jock Scott" operation. The police authorized the detention of 183 Africans, most of them Gikuyu, Embu and Meru, and, by 21 October, around 100 Mau Mau suspects had been taken into custody, including politicians, leaders of the Independent School Movement and publishers and editors of vernacular publications.

The first police announcement, issued at 11 a.m. on 21 October, said that: "At 9.45 a.m. reports received at Police Headquarters indicate that the operation went according to plan. Those arrested include Jomo Kenyatta, Richard Achieng' Oneko, Fred Kubai, Bildad Kaggia [leaders of KAU], Peter Gatabaki [member of KAU], Joel Kuria [?], Gakaara Wanjau, Willy Jimmy Wambugu, Victor Wokabi [editors of vernacular publications] and two women" [Sefath Serai and Rebecca Nyeri] (6).

(6) The police report is quoted in: Abuor, C. Ojwando, White Highlands No More, Nairobi, Pan African Researchers 1970, pp. 81-2. As far as we know, this is the only study .../

(apart from Berman and Lonsdale's Unhappy Valley)

Most of the "Jock Scott" detainees were first taken to Kajiado Detention Camp, about thirty miles from Nairobi. There Gakaara met other people involved in the vernacular press like Mwaniki Mugweru(7), John Cege Kabogoro and Judith Nyamurua.

3.3 Gakaara in Detention: The Prison Diary

Most of the information about Gakaara in detention is contained in the prison diary he kept from 1952 to 1956 hoping that one day he "would be able to publish a book which would give an objective picture of life in Mau Mau detention camps"(8).

Ngugi wa Thiong'o, who has always been particularly interested in the Mau Mau period, encouraged the author to submit his manuscript to Heinemann. Gakaara writes: "[In 1980] when word reached Ngugi that I had in my

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of Mau Mau where Gakaara's name is, at least, mentioned.
Henry Muoria Mwaniki's ~~first~~ second wife, Judith Nyamurua, had been editing Mumenyereri (The One Who Looks After) since her husband left for Britain, shortly before the State of Emergency was declared. On Muoria, see 2.6, 2.8 and 2.10.

(7) On Mugweru, see also 1.12, 2.9, 3.3 and 3.7.

(8) Gakaara wa Wanjau, Mau Mau Author in Detention, Nairobi, Heinemann 1988, p. xiii. The book was originally published in Gikuyu as Mwandiki wa Mau Mau Ithaamirio-ini, Nairobi, Heinemann 1983. From now on the page references will refer to the English translation. To avoid confusion, the English translation of the quotations which will follow is not mine, but the translator's.

possession diaries kept during the Emergency, he travelled all the way to my home in Karatina to encourage me to have the diaries published. He strongly felt that these diaries had great historical value"(9). Gakaara could not afford to publish such a long book through his press and moreover, Ngugi had probably in mind an international launching of the diary. In fact, the book was published in Gikuyu in 1983 and won the Noma Award for Publishing in Africa the following year(10). The English translation appeared in 1988.

The diary is an extremely valuable source of information on Gakaara and on life in detention camps in general(11), but, in spite of the editing done by Maina wa

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(9) Ibidem, p. vii. In his essays Ngugi wa Thiong'o has always stressed the importance of studying the Mau Mau movement, see e.g. "Mau Mau is Coming Back: The Revolutionary Significance of 20th October 1982", Barrel of a Pen, London, New Beacon Books 1983, pp. 7-31.

(10) Actually the 1984 Noma Award was awarded to two authors: Gakaara and Njabulo Ndebele. On Gakaara and the Noma Award, see 5.7.

(11) Gakaara's diary is not the only book centred on life in detention camps during the Emergency. The leading Gikuyu politician Josiah Mwangi Kariuki published 'Mau Mau' Detainee in 1963. Unfortunately, the historical value of the book is seriously compromised by the fact that the editor, Margery Perham, (or the publisher) instructed the author not to write the real names of the people he met in detention. The editor claims that she "agreed with Mr Kariuki that where he refers to any act of ill-treatment which might damage the reputation of the man concerned [sic!], the name will be suppressed. Europeans will be given the fictitious name of an English town, while Africans will be given the name of an Old Testament

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Kinyatti, a former history lecturer at Kenyatta University College now in exile(12), the diary presents a variety of problems. The scanty footnoting means that the book cannot be fully appreciated and understood by by a general reader who is not acquainted with Kenyan history(13). At the same

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figure", p. xxiii (in fact Gakaara is referred to as "Benjamin", pp. 128-9). Kariuki's work is analysed by Ali A. Mazrui in On Heroes and Uhuru Worship, London, Longman 1967, pp. 19-34 (repr. from Transition, Vol. III, No. 11, November 1963).

Valuable information on detention camps is also contained in the following autobiographical writings: Gikoyo, G. Gucu, We Fought for Freedom, Nairobi, East African Publishing House 1979; Kaggia, Bildad, op. cit.; Wachanga, Henry Kahinga, op. cit.; Wamweya, Joram, Freedom Fighter, Nairobi, East African Publishing House 1971; Waruhiu, Itote (General China), Mau Mau General, Nairobi, East African Publishing House 1967 and Mau Mau in Action, Nairobi, Transafrica 1979; and in two of the autobiographies of Mau Mau fighters collected and edited by Donald L. Barnett: Muchai, Karigo, The Hard Core: The Story of Karigo Muchai, Richmond (Canada), LSM Information Center 1973 and Mathu, Mohamed, The Urban Guerrilla, Richmond (Canada), LSM Information Center 1974.

The above works are analysed in my unpublished dissertation (Pugliese, Cristiana, op. cit. 1985) and briefly discussed in: Pugliese, Cristiana, "The Life-Story in Kenya: a Bibliography", Africa, Rome, XLI, N. 3, settembre 1986, pp. 440-446.

(12) Gakaara writes in the acknowledgements that Maina wa Kinyatti "offered to read" his materials "and to edit them" (Diary, p. viii). He also writes that "Maina wa Kinyatti assisted" him "in editing the Gikuyu diary" (Ibidem, p. 36, foot-note). See also Gakaara's statement to the police in 1986: "Maina agreed to re-edit the manuscript and also have it translated into English free of charge" ("Wanjau's Statement", The Weekly Review, May 23, 1986, p. 7). On Maina wa Kinyatti see also 5.1, 5.6 and 5.9.

(13) There are very few foot-notes and all of them appear only in the English translation of the diary, p. xvii, p. 2 (two foot-notes), p. 4, p. 12, p. 15 (two foot-notes),

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time, a lack of editing creates problems for scholars in Kenyan history, who, in order to use the diary, have to check all the data and names themselves; no index is provided(14).

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p. 36, p. 99, p. 120, p. 121 and p. 131. No indication is given whether they are notes by the editor or the translator The fact that there are no foot-notes in the Gikuyu original should show that they are the translator's notes, but this is not so because some of them are explanatory notes which must be the work of the editor (p. xvii, one of the two foot-notes on p. 2, p. 12, p. 36, p. 99, p. 121). Then why add explanatory notes only to the English translation? Moreover, I cannot understand the logic behind foot-notes, either the explanatory ones, or those referring to language. Why should the reader be more interested in knowing what a ndengu is (note on page 2, "a pea-like vegetable") than in knowing something about, say, the mucung'wa traditional dance (p. 12, no foot-note) which is not explained?

I have the impression that at first the editor (or translator?) intended to add numerous foot-notes and then, for some reason, abandoned the idea. This would explain why there are more explanatory notes in the first part of the book, but it does not explain either why these appear only in the English translation, or the logic behind them. One possible explanation for this confusion is the fact that the editor, Maina wa Kinyatti, was arrested in 1982 (cf. 5.1 and 5.9) and therefore was not able to finish his work. In any case this does not justify Heinemann for having brought out the book in its present form.

(14) Even the creation of an index is no easy task. At times Gakaara writes the forename of his fellow-detainees and at times their surname. As an example, on the same page, Morris Mwai Koigi, the editor of Mwaniriria (The Conversation Maker), is referred to as Mwai Koigi, then Koigi and finally Mwai (p. 119). In other cases there are detainees who have the same name and it is quite difficult to establish who is who. At times the English names are not spelt correctly. Gakaara writes, for instance, "Dr Shah", whereas from Itote's autobiography we know his name was Dr Shaw (cf. Diary, p. 129 and Itote, Waruhiu, op. cit., 1979, p. 105) and "Father Calton", whereas from Roberts's book we know his name was Father Colleton (cf. Diary, p. 135 and Roberts, Granville, The Mau Mau in

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The lack of editorial work is also shown in the appendices.

The list contained in Appendix One of the "Mau Mau leaders who were arrested on 20th October 1952" is incomplete (the names of Gatabaki and Kuria, for instance, do not appear(15); besides, the list is probably too long because it contains 139 names, whereas "on 20th October" the people arrested were probably around one hundred, although the number does not seem to be known for sure and scholars do not agree on that.

Appendix One B, a list of KAU leaders and members, is under the title "The Kenya African National Union", which was formed in 1960, instead of Kenya African Union.

In Appendix One C, a list of "Editors and Publishers of Books and Newspapers" (which do not include the dates of publication), Gakaara wrote for sure that Mwaniki Mugweru was the author of Wiyathi wa Andu Airu na Kamuingi Kovaga Ndiri, Freedom for the Africans and Unity is Strength (literally "A Small Group of People Lifts the Heavy Mortar"), but whoever edited the diary ran the two titles together as one title made up of two sentences linked by the conjunction "and". The mistake appears in the Gikuyu original, but it is more evident in the English

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Kenya, London, Hutchinson 1954, p. 27). On Colleton, see 3.7).

(15) See 3.2.

edition where the translator translated the two titles as "Freedom for Africans Through United Action [sic]". Another misunderstanding on the translator's part is over the title of a book by Gakaara. We read in the Gikuyu original (p. xvi): "I have explained the nature of the Mau Mau secret association in my book Agikuyu, Mau Mau na Wiyathi: Gicunji gia Keeri" (The Gikuyu, Mau Mau and Freedom: Part Two) and the translator translated: "(...) in the second chapter [sic!] of Agikuyu, Mau Mau and Kenya's [sic] Freedom(16)".

The "List of Detention Camps During the Mau Mau Emergency" in Appendix Two is incomplete. At first I thought it was simply a list of the camps quoted in the book, but it is not. Probably Gakaara gave the editor and publisher the lists of names and camps he could remember, but nobody checked them for completeness. One possible reason for this confusion is the fact that the editor, Maina wa Kinyatti, was arrested in 1982 and therefore was not able to finish his work. This is probably the reason why Gakaara's work has not been widely discussed by scholars in literature(17) and history(18).

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(16) Diary, English translation, p. xvi.

(17) In spite of the Noma award and the fact that the diary was published by Heinemann, literary critics have showed very little interest in it. Mineke Schipper, who dedicates her book Beyond the Boundaries: African Literature and Literary Theory (London, Allison & Busby

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The author wrote his diary in exercise books and kept them in his personal box under a false bottom. In 1956, when he was at Athi River Rehabilitation Camp, he asked a man from his home town, who was working at the camp, to deliver the box to a shop there. The following year he wrote to his wife, who had just been released, to collect the box(19). She also kept all the letters Gakaara sent her while he was in detention, which "were an invaluable

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1989) to the editor of Gakaara's diary Maina wa Kinyatti, does not include the diary in the brief section "Diary and Diary Novel" (pp. 114-118). Ngugi wa Thiong'o is probably the only author who wrote (briefly) on Gakaara's diary (Decolonising the Mind, London, Heinemann 1981, p. 24) and on Gakaara's activities (Ibidem, pp. 71-2).

Not only Gakaara's diary, but also Gakaara's works in general have not attracted the attention of literary critics, the only exception being Patrick R. Bennett who translated and published a few stories by Gakaara long before the author was awarded the Noma (see Introduction and 11.16).

(18) Historians have not shown much interest in Gakaara's diary and it does not appear in the bibliographies of the most recent studies on Mau Mau, see: Berman, Bruce, op. cit., 1990; Edgerton, Robert B., Mau Mau: an African Crucible, London, I.B. Tauris 1990; Furedi, Frank, op. cit., 1989. Scholars have shown very little interest in Gakaara's writings in general. Mihiriga ya Agikuyu (The Gikuyu Clans) seems to be the only book known by a few authors who list it in their bibliographies. See: Dutto, Carl A. op. cit., Merlo Pick, Vittorio, Ndai na Gicandi: Kikuyu Enigmas - Enigmi Kikuyu, Bologna, EMI 1973 and Muriuki, Godfrey, op. cit.. Only in the recently published book by Berman and Lonsdale is Gakaara's work briefly discussed. In Chapter Twelve John Lonsdale examines Gakaara's first political pamphlet and compares it to the works by Kenyatta and Muoria (op. cit., pp. 429, 431-2, 439, 441).

(19) Diary, pp. 175-6. Gakaara's wife had been detained at Kamiti Women's Prison, in present-day Kiambu District, for four years (see 3.6).

help" when he "came to filling in some dates in respect of the recorded happenings"(20).

As we shall see later on in this study, the most striking aspect of Gakaara's diary lies in his determination to go on with his activities as a writer and publisher. For this reason he tried to use the years he spent in detention profitably, by studying and writing.

3.4 Gakaara at Kajiado Detention Camp: October - July 1952

At Kajiado Detention Camp Gakaara composed songs(21) and wrote a play with other detainees. The title was Tahika Waariga, "Vomit it out", an expression used by Gikuyu medicinemen in cleansing ceremonies. He gave it to

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(20) Ibidem, p. vii.

(21) At Kajiado Gakaara composed Utuku wa Mweri Mirongo Iiri, "The Night of 20 October" (Ibidem, p. 4), Waatho wa Kwihuuga ni Wookire Kenya "The Rule of the Emergency Came to Kenya" (p. 16) and an untitled song in praise of KAU (p. 26). He also composed two songs at Manda Island Detention Camp: Guthaamirio Gicigirira ni Uhoro Utangiriganira "To Be Detained on an Island Is an Unforgettable Experience" (p. 31) and Ng'aaragu ya Kang'aari "Kang'aari's Hunger", (p. 49, Kang'aari was the name of a fellow detainee). The songs reported in the diary (whether by Gakaara or by other detainees) were composed to commemorate particular events; they are far from being in praise of the armed struggle, which began after Gakaara's arrest.

a British officer "to deliver it to a a Nairobi publisher, but he never did"(22).

Gakaara and other fellow detainees elected five representatives to draft a memorandum for the Governor of Kenya, Evelyn Baring, who was going to visit the camp. They asked him, among other things, to explain the reasons why they had been detained, to give them access to newspapers and whether "Gakaara could be allowed to go home under escort since his father had died"(23). The author adds that he "had already written a letter to the Governor"(24), presumably asking for permission to visit his family.

It is worth noting that three of the five representatives chosen by the detainees were people involved in the vernacular press: the writer Mwaniki Mugweru(25), John Cege, former editor of the weekly Wiyathi (Freedom) and John D. Kali, a Kamba, editor of KAU's newspaper in Kiswahili Sauti ya Mwafrika (The Voice of the African)(26).

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(22) Ibidem, p. 22.

(23) Ibidem, p. 14.

(24) Ibidem, p. 14.

(25) Gakaara reports the text of a song composed by Mugweru on p. 6. On Mugweru see also 1.12, 2.9, 3.2, 3.3, and 3.7.

(26) On the vernacular press, see 2.6.

We shall see in the next section that Gakaara and his group of friends wrote many other petitions, especially during their first years in detention.

Shortly after arriving at the camp, Gakaara was interrogated and told that the main grounds for his detention were Witikio wa Gikuyu na Mumbi (The Creed of Gikuyu and Mumbi), Roho ya Kiume na Bidii kwa Mwafrika (The Spirit of Manhood and Perseverance for the African) and the hymn book he published in 1952, Nyimbo cia Gikuyu na Mumbi (the Songs of Gikuyu and Mumbi)(27). The authorities wanted him to confess that he had taken the "Mau Mau oath", but Gakaara denied it.

To break an oath in traditional Gikuyu society was in itself taboo. Moreover, in the case of the oath of the banned KCA, or oath of unity, to confess to the oath meant to betray the political cause the initiates had sworn to serve(28). The detainees' refusal to disclose the oath became the symbol of their continued adherence to the struggle.

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(27) Diary, pp. 10-11.

(28) When taking the oath of the banned KCA, or "oath of unity", the initiate repeated: "I shall never reveal this secret of the KCA oath, which is of Gikuyu and Mumbi and which demands for land and freedom, to any person who is not a member of our society. If I ever reveal it, may this oath kill me" (Barnett, Donald L.; Njama, Karari, op. cit., p. 118).

The confession of the oath was essential in the government's policy of "rehabilitation". According to a committee which had been set up by the government to report on the "sociological causes underlying Mau Mau" and to make "proposals on the means of ending it", Mau Mau had its roots in an irrational fear that could only be alleviated by confessing the oath; without this first step, rehabilitation could not start(29).

Since Gakaara had not confessed to the oath, in July 1953 he was transferred to Manda Island Detention Camp, in the Indian Ocean, to undergo further rehabilitation.

3.5 Gakaara at Manda Island Detention Camp: July 1953 - July 1955

At Manda the author was interrogated again. He admitted he was the author of the books they showed him, but, again, he denied having taken the oath(30).

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(29) Cf. Rosberg, Carl G.; Nottingham, John, op. cit., pp. 334-47.
The committee was advised, among the others, by L.S.B Leakey and Dr Carothers. The latter had been for many years in psychiatric charge of Mathari Mental Hospital on the outskirts of Nairobi. He is the author of a well-known study on the "psychology of Mau Mau" (Carothers, J.C., op. cit.).

(30) Diary, pp. 81-2.

In the new camp Gakaara and a group of fellow detainees elected a camp leader, John Kabogoro Cege(31), and wrote letters of complaint, mainly against forced labour, to the camp officer(32). Since they did not receive satisfactory explanations from him, they started writing petitions to the Governor of Kenya(33). They even sent a telegram to the Queen complaining about the measures taken by the camp officer against those detainees who were rejecting forced labour(34).

In detention Gakaara associated only with a small group of people, former editors of vernacular newspapers and former KAU politicians. Not all of them were Gikuyu and this demonstrates that what distinguished them from the others was not their ethnic group, but their education(35).

They were always elected to write petitions and draft memoranda and this shows that the other detainees regarded them as the most educated people in the camp. Moreover, there must have been very few detainees who could write in

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(31) On Chege, see 2.6 and 3.4.

(32) Diary, pp. 36-7.

(33) Ibidem, p. 38, p. 54 and p. 65.

(34) Ibidem, p. 42.

(35) Gakaara considered himself an "educated Mau Mau", see Interview, Appendix 1.

English correctly(36). Among the petitioners we always find Gakaara and his closest friends, John Kabogoro Cege(37), Victor Murage Wokabi(38), John D. Kali(39) and Muinga Chokwe(40).

It would be difficult to understand Gakaara's (and his friends') "faith" in petitions without seeing this channel of political action in historical perspective(41).

All the detainees who were writing petitions had been actively involved in politics before their arrest. KCA (and then its successor, KAU) made extensive use of petitions as they were one of the few means of "constitutional" action made available to Africans within

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(36) Gakaara, Cege, Wokabi and Kali were also chosen to talk to the Commissioner of Prisons who toured the camp because they could speak Kiswahili correctly (Diary, pp 46-7). On another occasion Gakaara, Kali and Chokwe are among the "English-speaking detainees" who talk to Dr Baker, the psychologist who toured Manda Island Detention Camp (Ibidem, pp. 104-5).

(37) On Cege, see 2.6 and 3.4.

(38) Victor Murage Wokabi was the editor of the weeklies Muthamaki (The Statesman) and Gikuyu na Mumbi (Gikuyu and Mumbi), see 2.6. On Wokabi in detention, see also 3.6.

(39) On Kali, see also 2.6 and 3.4.

(40) Muinga Chokwe was a member of KAU Central Committee. See also 5.3.

(41) The issue of petitions is very interesting and would deserve further study. Only Bruce Berman (op. cit., pp. 230-1 and 252) and Carl G. Rosberg and John Nottingham (op. cit., p. 264) discuss briefly the attitude of African leaders towards petitions. Carl G. Rosberg and John Nottingham, focus on the actual content of petitions and memoranda written by KA, KCA and KAU.

the colonial state. When such legal modes of action failed to gain the KCA any significant direct influence on government policy, the impossibility of resolving issues within the constraints imposed by the local containment of African political activity was revealed and the leaders of the KCA began to seek access to the central political arena in Nairobi, and even to the metropolitan authorities in London(42).

Archives in London and Nairobi show that the letters and telegrams from the KCA were directed at first to the Chief Native Commissioner, over the head of the Provincial Administration, and then increasingly to the Governor, the Colonial Office and the Secretary of State(43).

In April 1954 a new camp officer arrived at Manda, John D. Russell(44), a man who would indirectly but strongly influence Gakaara's literary development.

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(42) Cf. Berman, Bruce, op. cit., pp. 230-1.

(43) Ibidem, p. 252, note 95. Several petitions are reported in: Mungeam, G.H. comp., op. cit., pp. 483-539.

(44) In his diary Gakaara writes that the officer's name was "John D. Russell", but he possibly remembers or spells the name wrongly, as no British officer of that name appears in the records of the Pensions Department of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office. I went to the Public Records Archives to check and I read in The Official Gazette of the Colony and Protectorate of Kenya that a certain officer, C.E.G. Russell, had been sent to Manda Island Detention Camp, but his name does not appear either in the Foreign & Commonwealth Office or Colonial Office records of past employees.

Russell's liberal views were clearly shown by a speech he gave to the detainees, where he underlined that they "deserved respect as political prisoners". This is particularly revealing because most British officers considered and treated Mau Mau detainees as common criminals(45).

Russell abolished forced labour and restricted the power of African guards, who in the past had been mistreating and beating the detainees. He told the detainees that "his major interest was to see people further their education"(46) and allowed them to start a camp-school in which Gakaara was one of the teachers.

The camp officer actively helped the detainees to run the school. He ordered books for them and even brought some personally on coming back from leave(47). But, most

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(45) Personal conversation with Thomas Askwith, November 1990.
In 1953 Askwith was Commissioner for Communal relations and wrote a report which formed the basis for the discussions of the committee on Mau Mau advised by J. C. Carothers. Askwith was soon sacked for his "liberal" ideas in 1954. He wrote a booklet which was used in rehabilitation programmes, The Story of Kenya's Progress, Nairobi, The Eagle Press 1953.

(46) Diary, p. 120.

(47) Ibidem, pp. 119-20 and 139. Russell used books also to punish those detainees who disobeyed camp rules. Gakaara writes: "The officer was very well aware that detainees from Manda valued books and enjoyed reading more than anything else; to punish detainees he often resorted to the deprivation of books and the banning of reading" (Ibidem, p. 148).

important, he allowed Gakaara and another four detainees, Cege, Chokwe, Koigi and Wokabi, to receive correspondence courses from Britain.

It is worth noting that, apart from Chokwe who was a member of KAU Central Committee in Mombasa, the other detainees who received the course had been editors of vernacular newspapers(48). They were probably thinking of resuming their activities as editors and publishers on their release.

At first Gakaara enrolled for two correspondence courses, one in journalism and the other in short story writing, but he soon abandoned the former to concentrate on the latter, which he found more interesting.

Gakaara received his correspondence course in short story writing from June 1954 till July 1955, when he left Manda Island Detention Camp for Takwa Detention Camp.

The course proved crucial to his artistic development, as it gave him a theoretical basis for creative writing. Gakaara himself admits that it "was very useful" and he "benefited a lot" from it(49). He "read the lessons, wrote the answers to the exercises and sent some short stories" as required(50). In the same period he also

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(48) On their activities, see 2.6.

(49) Interview, Appendix 1.

(50) Ibidem. On the influence of the short story course on Gakaara, see 7.4 and 7.5.

"wrote some stories" in Kiswahili and sent them to the newspaper Baraza (The Assembly)(51).

We shall see later on in this study that there is a very great difference between Gakaara's first fictional work and those written after his release, in terms of development of plot, character delineation, and cohesion in general(52).

In his diary the author writes that he sent a short story to Baraza, but it was returned to him by Dr Baker, a psychologist in charge of rehabilitation, who had arrived at Manda in June 1954, and who probably did not share Russell's liberal views(53).

At Manda Gakaara was informed that his mother "was being kept under arrest at the chief's camp on suspicion that she had acted as a treasurer of the Mau Mau" and that his wife "was in detention at Kamiti Women's Prison" in present-day Kiambu District(54).

In July 1955 Gakaara and most other detainees were transferred to Takwa Detention Camp, a larger camp which

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(51) Ibidem. I could not trace the short stories that Gakaara published in Baraza. I asked Gakaara whether they were Swahili translations of the stories he wrote for the course and he said that, although he could not remember exactly, they probably were.

(52) On Gakaara's first work of fiction, see 8.1.

(53) Diary, p. 137.

(54) Ibidem, p. 116.

was also on Manda island, whereas the hardcore detainees at Takwa were moved to Manda Island Detention Camp.

3.6 Gakaara at Takwa Detention Camp: July 1955 - April 1956

By 1955 Mau Mau activities were almost entirely confined to negligible actions. The number of fighters was estimated at 3,000, operating in the Aberdares and on Mount Kenya. Almost a million people had been resettled in new villages in Gikuyuland and 4,000 people were detained in 49 detention camps.

Special teams were formed to start obtaining confessions and generally sort the camps into three categories(55). Those thought to have no record of Mau Mau activities, and toward whom the identifying home guards held no personal grudges, were classified "White". These people would be moved through a series of camps ever closer to their homes, a process known as the "pipeline", and finally they would be released under a restriction order confining them to their villages for six months. Another group, about whom little or nothing was known,

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(55) In some cases a fourth category was added, that of "Light Grey" detainees who received slightly more privileges than those classified as "Grey".

were classified as "Grey", or "Yellow"(56). These were people whom the home guards suspected but had no information regarding previous Mau Mau activities. The third group contained detainees whose activities in Mau Mau were fairly well known. they would not be pushed through the pipeline toward their home locations, but destined to remoter areas in Kenya. Ione Leigh writes: "The 'blacks', the worst type of criminals, actual and potential murderers, are to be rehabilitated. The 'greys' are to be put to work in camps for which they will receive pay. The 'whites' are to be released"(57).

The detainees who had come to Takwa from Manda were all issued white uniforms and Gakaara comments sarcastically that "they had become 'white' - acceptable to the colonial government"(58).

On arriving at Takwa, Gakaara's main concern was to start a camp-school. As he was among the most educated detainees, he was chosen again to be a teacher and was elected secretary of the school committee. Among the teachers was also another editor and publisher of vernacular publications, Victor Wokabi, who became the principal of the camp-school.

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(56) Muchai, Karigo, op. cit., pp. 49-52.

(57) Leigh, Ione, In the Shadow of Mau Mau, London, W.H. Allen 1954, p. 201.

(58) Diary, p. 162.

The author never questioned Western-style education. On the contrary, even in Roho ya Kiume na Bidii kwa Mwafrika (the Spirit of Manhood and Perseverance for the African) which, according to the authorities contained "charges of a highly inflammatory nature against the European Community"(59), he had indirectly implied the superiority of the "European Community" at least in education, his criticism being simply the colour bar that prevented Africans from attaining it. Gakaara writes in his pamphlet:

> "How can you lit a lamp and then cover it on one side, so that only a little light can be seen? We have been shown that education is good and yet we do not have enough schools and we are denied funds (...) Now we are glad because we have discovered that their [the Europeans'] secret plan is to prevent us from getting wealthy. In fact, if we were rich, we would build multi-storey schools and our own hotels where they could not go. We would own big shops and big cars and even aeroplanes so that our children would fly to foreign countries to furhter their education and so they [the Europeans] would see that there is nothing they have and we don't"(60).

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(59) A photostat copy of the charge against Gakaara appears in Appendix 10 of the diary, p. 252.

(60) Mageria Nomo Mahota (Make an Attempt in Order to Succeed), Nairobi, Gakaara Book Service 1952, pp. 11-14, my translation. A photostat copy of the pamphlet appears in Appendix 4 of Gakaara's diary in Gikuyu, pp. 175-179. The English translation reported in Appendix 4 of the English translation of the diary is extremely free and often misleading. The last part of the above passage, for instance, is translated as follows:

> "The white man's strategy is to keep us enslaved to poverty so that we cannot initiate our own genuine development. We, therefore, realise that we need to

.../

In detention Gakaara did not change his attitude towards Western education. At the camp-school he decided, with other teachers, to use "the syllabuses operative in the government schools"(61). He writes that the students enrolled for classes were particularly happy to learn how to read and write in English:

> "Many of the detainees who had enrolled for classes had made good progress. Those who had not known how to read and write had learned to read and write in both English and Kiswahili. Those who had been literate in their mother tongue had learned to read and write in English adequately. Most detainees were happy and proud of our achievements. Some of the things students used to say were: 'We do not know what we shall give our teachers when we get home to show our gratitude!' Or a student may comment: 'A great transformation has been wrought in my life, for I had lived a large part of my life in ignorance'. Or: 'I didn't know the ABC, but now I can make sense out of something written in English; I can read the East African Standard for myself!' Or yet again: 'I used to transact my business in the darkness of ignorance; I did not know how to assess my profit or loss'"(62).

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break from their scheme in order to create a new order where we can build up our wealth. Then, there will be no limit to our aspirations, and we shall able to build schools with multi-storey classrooms for our children to study in (...) We shall fly out our children to great schools in foreign lands. It will then dawn on the white man that he is no better than ourselves" (Diary, p. 240-3).

On Mageria Nomo Mahota (Make an Attempt in Order to Succeed), see 2.5 (on the Swahili original) and 2.9 (on the Gikuyu translation). For further comments on the English translation of the pamphlet, see 3.7.

(61) Ibidem, p. 163.

(62) Ibidem, p. 162.

It is clear that the detainees identified education with Western education and, just as Gakaara did in his pamphlet, they compared it to a "light", adopting the very same image that can be found in almost all writings by Europeans about the "Dark Continent". Although Africans were opposing colonial rule, they valued British education and the English language.

At Takwa, just as at Manda, detainees had to work in the fields for a small sum of money. Gakaara comments that hard labour was a way to "soften up" the detainees and, in fact, the authorities believed it to be an essential aspect of the process of building up new attitudes during rehabilitation. But the author does not think that the camp-school may have the same "rehabilitative" function as hard labour, or he does not consider this aspect important enough to compromise the value of the work done at the camp-school(63).

In detention Gakaara seemed to be in the company of the other teachers at the camp-schools most of the time,

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(63) Not all detainees shared Gakaara's enthusiasm about camp-schools. For instance, Gucu G. Gikoyo, a former guerrilla fighter who was detained at Kandara Detention Camp, writes: "In the so-called camp-schools we were taught nothing else but how the oath was bad and how we should not be obstinate in confessing all we had done in connection with the oath. We were taught geography and history, but all led to the same conclusion, that we should confess the oath as a mark of mercy for one's parents or family who were missing them and who would greatly enjoy their presence at home" (Gikoyo, Gucu G., op. cit., p. 219).

or with people from his home district, Nyeri. He did not show much interest in other detainees, even in the case of very well-known politicians and guerrilla fighters.

The author received a letter saying that his wife and mother were both detained at Kamiti Women's Detention Camp. The war was a family tragedy for Gakaara, not only were his mother and wife detained for almost four years(64), but his father, the CSM Reverend Johana Wanjau, was murdered in December 1952. At first it seemed that he had been killed by Mau Mau fighters because he was a Christian and had refused to take the oath, but then it was discovered that his neighbours were involved in the plot. There was a conflict over land boundaries and they hoped to acquire his land after his death(65).

At Takwa Gakaara was interrogated again and asked about the oath. The officer told him that "had he not

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(64) Gakaara's mother was released in April and his wife in July 1957 (cf. Diary, p. 193 and p. 194).

(65) The reasons behind the Reverend's murder do not come out clearly from the diary. Both Gakaara's dedication "to the respectful memory" of his father "Rev. Johana Wanjau, who was killed in the course of his Christian ministry during the War for Freedom" (p. vi) and his remark that "as it turned out" his father "had been killed by Mau Mau at Mihuti, in Mukurweini, Nyeri, where he had been assigned by the Church" (p. 13) give the impression that the man was killed because he was a Christian. Only later on the author briefly explains that his father's murder "was motivated by hatred bred by disagreement over my father's land ownership" (p. 167). I asked Gakaara about his father's death in the interview, see Interview, Appendix 1.

taken the oath he would not have composed Mau Mau hymns and written a Mau Mau Creed". He explained to him that, since his "record was not as bad as that of other detainees in the camp", it was in his "own interest" to confess to the oath so that he could be allowed to go home(66). But the author was not convinced and, again, he denied having taken the oath.

Although at Takwa Gakaara was no longer receiving his correspondence course, he did not lose his interest in writing. He composed Mihiriga ya Agikuyu (The Gikuyu Clans), a book which describes the Gikuyu clans and the distinctive traits of the people belonging to each of them. He does not explain why he chose that particular subject, but writing in his mother tongue and about his people was probably a way not to lose his identity in an "alien" place like a detention camp, a way of asserting his own roots and of affirming Gikuyu traditional values in general.

In March 1956 some Gikuyu elders from each district visited Takwa and talked to the detainees, explaining to them that if they made a full confession they would be transferred first to Athi River Detention Centre and then to their homes. After a few days Gakaara was interrogated by a Special Branch Officer who "carried out hurried

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(66) Diary, pp. 159-60.

interrogations as well as a classification of individual detainees"(67). Although the author refused to work in the interrogation court and again denied having taken the oath, he was transferred to Athi River Rehabilitation Centre(68). The fact that he was not sent to a remote camp, but "pushed along the pipeline" shows that, even if he had not confessed the oath, the authorities had good reasons to believe he would be rehabilitated eventually. Gakaara's work at the camp-school must have been a decisive factor in influencing their choice. Moreover, as we shall see in the next section, in 1956 the government had started a new policy for a quick rehabilitation and release of the detainees.

(67) Ibidem, p. 171. The officers were carrying out "hurried interrogations" as part of the new policy for a quick release of detainees, cf. 3.7.

(68) Gakaara writes in his diary "Athi River Detention Camp" (p. 173), but in July 1955 the authorities had transferred most of the 600 hardcore detainees to Lodwar and Manyani Detention camps and Athi River Detention Camp had become "Athi River Rehabilitation Centre".

3.7 Gakaara at Athi River Rehabilitation Centre: April 1956 - February 1958

The operational phase of the Emergency came virtually to an end in November 1956 when the army withdrew completely from active operations. Between 1956 and 1958 increasing pressure came from the British government to speed up the rate of releases. Since resistance in the forests was limited to small, isolated and widely dispersed groups, the focus began to shift to the Emergency Detention Camps, where at the end of 1956 there were around 20,000 detainees in 39 camps and around 8,000 Mau Mau convicts were scattered among 21 prisons(69).

After arriving at Athi River Rehabilitation Centre Gakaara was "no longer able to record events on a day-to-day basis"(70) and the happenings narrated in the last three chapters of the diary are a reconstruction a posteriori. We can notice a sudden change of tone, a more detailed description and a political analysis of events which was almost absent in the actual diary. It is unclear whether this is due to the editing of Maina wa Kinyatti or to contributions from other people or both. In the acknowledgements Gakaara writes that he "held enlightening

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(69) Venys, Ladislav. op. cit., p. 83.

(70) Diary, p. 175.

discussions on happenings" with some former detainees(71). It is not surprising that in the final chapters some sort of "external" influence is particularly evident because, in order to reconstruct the events, the author had to rely also on the information given to him by other people(72).

Gakaara no longer reports small, everyday happenings, or the visits of high-rank British officers to the camp, or the activities organized by detainees(73), which characterized his actual diary. The descriptive approach gives way to an analytical and "broader" view almost absent in the previous chapters.

The author opens the chapter on Athi River with an analysis of "the colonial design to scatter detainees to all the corners of Kenya"(74) and gives information about

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(71) Ibidem, p. vii.

(72) As an example, in the diary in the chapter on Athi River, Father "Calton" (cf. 3.3) is referred to with his correct name, Colleton (Diary, p. 178). Gakaara does not explain, as he always does on similar occasions, that he had already met the man at Manda and this shows that he probably wrote down the name as somebody else told him (correctly).

(73) On 29 April 1957, for instance, the Governor of Kenya visited the camp and on this occasion the detainees organized a puppet show (Ministry of Community Development and Rehabilitation, Newsletter, No. 2, May 1957, p. 4). The following month "a Sports Day was held for detainees (...) Prizes were awarded, and entertainment given (...) by dancers (...) (Ibidem, p. 5). These events are not reported by Gakaara, whereas, in his actual diary, he never fails to portray such happenings.

(74) Diary, p. 175.

the camp, including when it was built and the number of detainees there.

The focus of the diary is no longer the restricted group of people Gakaara used to spend his time with, but on the camp as a whole and on the problems faced by different people there. Thus he talks about the Moral Rearmament organization (MRA)(75) and he reports conversations among detainees, although he was not personally involved in them.

Josiah Mwangi Kariuki, who was in the same camp, explains that "Athi River was a confession centre. Although there was other work going on in the camp, the most important job was screening and being screened.

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(75) "The MRA was a movement which drew membership from the whole international community (...) Central tenets or ideas in the movement's teachings were: 1. Trustworthiness or Honesty; 2. Humility; 3. Cleanliness; and 4. Love for One Another (...) The MRA people (...) were supposed to induce confessions of the Mau Mau oaths by the detainees (...) Almost all the detainees we found at Athi River had become members of the MRA and they had confessed to having taken the oath" (Ibidem, pp. 177-8). If the authorities at first encouraged the MRA as a good means to get confessions, they soon opposed it, as the movement indirectly encouraged solidarity among detainees. When Gakaara arrived at Athi River the officers had confiscated all MRA literature and had condemned several MRA members to isolation, Mwaniki Mugweru among them (Ibidem, p. 177). On Mugweru, see 1.12, 2.9, 3.2 and 3.3.

A detailed description of MRA activities at Athi River is contained in the autobiography of Mohamed Mathu, who was a member of the organization (op. cit., pp. 70-4).

Confessions had to be got somehow, preferably voluntarily, but if necessary by force"(76).

Gakaara was soon interrogated by a Special Branch officer regarding Roho ya Kiume na Bidii kwa Mwafrika (The Spirit of Manhood and Perseverance for the African) and Witikio wa Gikuyu na Mumbi (The Creed of Gikuyu and Mumbi). Again he admitted that he was the author, but did not confess to the oath. The officer accused him of "planning the Mau Mau insurrection" and "teaching terrorism and ideas steeped in dark ignorance" through his writings(77). It is clear that the interrogator was not supposed (and probably not even able) to make any critical evaluation of Gakaara's writings, he only wanted him to confess to the oath as soon as possible and by any means.

The officer had a file on Gakaara and was probably aware of the fact that the author had enjoyed a certain freedom at Manda Camp, Thus he told Gakaara that that was "Athi River and not Manda", where he had been "given to all kinds of boasting": now he had to confess at any cost to "all the Mau Mau oaths" he had taken, as his last words

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(76) Kariuki, Josiah Mwangi, op. cit., pp. 130-1. Kariuki was at Athi River when Gakaara was also there. Other authors were in Gakaara's same camps during the Emergency, but Kariuki is the only one who remembers him in his work. Gakaara also writes briefly about Kariuki (cf. Diary, pp. xii, 176, 192 and 195).

(77) Ibidem, p. 181.

to the writer implied: "For confess you must and will!"(78).

At Athi River the officers resorted to violence in the "most difficult" cases and both Gakaara and Josiah Mwangi Kariuki relate some cases of torture(79). In fact, after 1956, the colonial authorities increasingly accepted the legitimacy of the use of force to extract the vital initial confession from detainees in order to accelerate the rate of releases, "although no one was foolish enough to put this permission anywhere in writing"(80).

The interrogators at the camp were particularly tough and Gakaara was no longer in a position to deny having taken the oath. Thus, he had to confess at least to the first oath, the KCA oath or "oath of unity".

Gakaara's confession to the oath is implied and is not stated clearly in the diary. The author simply writes that the Special Branch officer "found it difficult to believe" that he "had taken only one oath, the first (...) of 1952". "The interrogators suspected" that he "had taken

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(78) Ibidem, p. 182.

(79) Ibidem, p. 179 and p. 195. The passage on p. 195 does not appear in the Gikuyu original (cf. Gikuyu original, p. 152).

Kariuki himself was tortured at Athi River, see Kariuki, Josiah Mwangi, op. cit., pp. 129-31. Gakaara also writes about it, see Diary, p. 195.

(80) Ibidem, p. 128. On the use of torture to extract confessions, see also: Rosberg, Carl G.; Nottingham, John, op. cit., pp. 341-2.

the Platoon Oath before writing this book [The Spirit of Manhood and Perseverance for the African]"(81). It is left to the reader to understand that, in short, the above passage means that the author had confessed to the "oath of unity", but denied having also taken the second oath, or "platoon oath". It is unclear whether this obscurity, or rather obliqueness in the diary, is due to a deliberate choice on the author's part or on the editor's (or both), who did not approve "ideologically" of Gakaara's confession(82).

The second hypothesis seems to be confirmed by the attitude of the translator, who at this point introduces a rhetorical question, "How had I come to take the oath?(83)", which is not in the Gikuyu original. It has

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(81) Diary, p. 189. Actually the authorities were wrong as Gakaara had taken the first oath in February or March 1952, that is to say after writing the Swahili original and before publishing the Gikuyu translation. He took the second oath, or Platoon Oath, only in September 1952 after publishing the Gikuyu translation. It would be interesting to compare the Swahili original, Roho ya Kiume na Bidii kwa Mwafrika (The Spirit of Manhood and Perseverance for the African) and the Gikuyu translation Mageria Nomo Mahota (Make an Attempt in Order to Succeed), but unfortunately the former is not available.

(82) Gakaara said that he was "not supposed to clarify everything about the oath" in the diary because the oath cannot be publicly discussed, Interview, Appendix 1.

(83) Diary, p. 189. The translator seems particularly fond of adding rhetorical questions which are not in the Gikuyu original, cf. e.g. English translation p. 177 and Gikuyu original p. 140; English translation p. 188 and Gikuyu original p. 147.

the function of setting out the circumstances for the reader without giving the impression that the explanation which follows was actually what the author did say to the interrogators(84).

In the Gikuyu original the choice of certain words is at least unusual for the author who does not use such terms in his other writings. Almost every time Gakaara mentions the name of a camp officer or a Briton, we find it preceded by "the imperialist" or "the colonialist", which is not his style. Thus, I believe that words like "imperialist" or "brain-washing" were added to the manuscript by the editor(85).

There are many discrepancies between the Gikuyu original and the English translation, but it is the translation of Gakaara's first political pamphlet appearing in Appendix 1 which suffer more from the intervention of the translator(86). Possibly, the

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(84) The authorities already knew the names of the people involved so Gakaara did not damage anybody. He had simply to confirm what they already knew and "state it well" so that they would believe him (Interview, Appendix 1).

(85) A similar editing of the text can be found in Kinyatti's collection of Mau Mau songs he edited and translated. A significant example is his translation of one of the songs composed by Gakaara in detention, "The Night of 20 October 1952"; "they were led to detention camps" (Diary, Gikuyu original p. 3 and English translation p. 4) is translated by Kinyatti "they were led to detention in the horror camps of the oppressors" (Kinyatti, op. cit., 1980, p. 62).

(86) On this topic, see also 3.6.

The inaccuracy of Kinyatti's translation has been pointed out by J. Throup (op. cit., p. 138 fn. 61 and consolsle (op. cit., p. 288 and p. 313 fn. 161).

translator and the editor had in mind an international audience for the English edition and they were particularly interested in showing that the Mau Mau movement was a nationalist and revolutionary movement(87). Thus, for example, "Gikuyu" in the Gikuyu original becomes "African" in the English translation of Gakaara's pamphlet(88) and, similarly, "Mau Mau movement" becomes "nationalist Mau Mau movement"(89). In some cases even sentences are added(90).

The editor probably wanted the "political message of the diary" to reach the readers. But, unfortunately, instead of concentrating on the actual content of the book, trying for instance to add foot-notes or a comprehensive introduction to explain the historical background (as Donald L. Barnett effectively did in Mau Mau from Within). The editor concentrated on the content, altering Gakaara's style.

The translator of the diary, Ngigi Njoroge, who is a senior editor with Heinemann Kenya in Nairobi, shares the editor's view. By adding words like "revolutionary" or

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(87) On this topic, see also 2.10.

(88) Cf. Gikuyu original p. 176 and English translation, p. 236.

(89) Cf. Gikuyu original p. 146 and English translation, p. 186.

(90) See e.g., 5.2.

"heroic" to the English translation, he renders Gakaara's language ideologically rhetorical, whereas, on the contrary, the writer's original language is very different and never rhetorical in that way, whether he is writing or speaking(91).

Gakaara confessed to the oath, but this was not enough for the authorities to push him along the "pipeline". The author goes on to explain that before he "could be placed on parole", the chief Rehabilitation Officer wanted to put him "to the test"(92).

Gakaara decided to cooperate with the authorities in the hope of being eventually released(93), but he always rejected all forms of violence that the other "reformed" detainees were using against the hardcores. Josiah Mwangi Kariuki describes Gakaara as "a very clever and able man and an expert at writing booklets in Kikuyu. He was a co-operator, but a most subtle one. He never beat anyone and he always treated the other detainees well"(94).

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(91) Cf. e.g. Interview, Appendix 1.

(92) Diary, p. 190.

(93) See also Interview, Appendix 1.

(94) Kariuki, Josiah Mwangi, op. cit., p. 128.
Gakaara writes in his diary: "J.M. Kariuki in his book Mau Mau Detainee (...) has used a fictitious name for me - 'Benjamin'. He describes me as a good and prolific writer of books in Gikuyu. He says I valued solidarity among the detainees and always used my cunning to avoid putting fellow detainees into trouble. He has also said I

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Kariuki explains that detainees "had to prove their loyalty at Athi River and, clearly, the more people they converted, the greater would their loyalty (and their prospects of getting home) seem to be"(95). Thus Gakaara was asked to use his skill as a writer to win over the detainees who had not confessed to the oath and to write anti-Mau Mau propaganda. In short, he found himself doing more or less what he had been doing before his arrest, but with the opposite aim.

Gakaara composed anti-Mau Mau songs, a "skilful pamphlet on confession", which was distributed to all detainees, and wrote and directed some sketches(96), but in his diary he does not mention any of these activities because he may have felt embarrassed to show that he collaborated with the authorities in order to be released(97). In contrast, however, he does write extensively about an anti-Mau Mau play which he composed

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went on with my work as an author and a publisher when I left detention" (Diary, p. 192).

(95) Kariuki, Josiah Mwangi, op. cit., p. 127.

(96) Ibidem, p. 129. Gakaara does not mention this pamphlet in his diary.

(97) See also Interview, Appendix 1. This kind of "censorship" may also be attributed to the editor(s), who may have eliminated those passages which did not comply with their interpretation and presentation of Gakaara's diary as "a resistance fighter's prison diary (...) written under the most arduous conditions of colonial detention" (see 5.7).

and directed, Reke Aciirithio ni Mehia Make (Let the Guilt of His Crimes Weigh Heavy on His Conscience), because "it left a lot of doubt about the state" of his rehabilitation "in the minds of the interrogations [sic] and rehabilitation officers"(98).

The authorities were not pleased with Gakaara's play, which was performed several times in July and August 1956. They accused the author of fostering "hatred between detained people and the homeguards"(99) and, to put him to a further test, the camp officer, Major Breckenridge, asked him to edit the camp-magazine in Gikuyu Atiriri! Gitugi kia Mucii (Listen! The Pillar of the Home), which had been started by his wife.

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(98) Diary, p. 191. Since in the Gikuyu original there is no mistake (cf. Gikuyu original, p. 149), it may either be a misprint or a mistake on the translator's part. As remarked on before, English mistakes are not uncommon in the translation.

(99) Diary, p. 191.
It is strange that the officers allowed the performance and then realized the play was not what they expected. Gakaara himself writes that his materials went through a long procedure before being accepted. He had first to "take the material to the Rehabilitation Officer. J. Kiereini for vetting. Kiereini would verify whether or not I had reviled Mau Mau satisfactorily. He would also discuss the materials with the senior British officers, after translating them from the Gikuyu into English. if the materials were passed by the imperialist authorities [sic], the plays (Diary) would be eligible for performance by the detainees" (p. 190).
I have read the play and if, on the one hand, it is true that the homeguard is the villain, on the other it is also true that the hero is the detainee who confessed to the oath and who, as Kariuki writes, "is richer and surpasses in some way the hard-cores" (Kariuki, op. cit., p. 129).

The weekly "was published in Gikuyu, but there was a limited circulation English-language edition entitled simply The Pillar. J.M. Kariuki (...) would do the translation from Gikuyu into English"(100).

Kariuki writes: "Rochester [Breckenridge] told me that he wished me to join the staff of Atiriri, the Camp Magazine, which was edited by Benjamin [Gakaara], who after his release resumed his printing and publishing interests, and distributed free to all detainees. My job was to translate Kikuyu into English. Before I did this, I told them that they should realize that I would only do this work in the spirit of a prisoner doing, under orders, a job which he dislikes(101)".

The authorities were pleased with Gakaara's work and by May 1957 they proudly remarked that the camp-magazine had been a success: "Our magazine "Atiriri" continues to arouse interest, contributions come in in large numbers, not only from camps, but from villagers, who are anxious to receive copies and to contribute. Some articles and letters sent in by C.D.O.'s have been greatly appreciated and we should welcome more of these, also puzzles and jokes"(102).

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(100) Diary, p. 192.

(101) Kariuki, Josiah Mwangi, op. cit., p. 128.

(102) Ministry of Community Development and Rehabilitation, op. cit., p. 4.

Gakaara was finally granted parole in October 1957. In December the new camp officer, Dennis Lakin, who took over from Major Breckenridge, "took measures to have all those detainees who had already made their confessions transferred to district and divisional camps nearest to their homes"(103). Thus Gakaara was moved to Karatina Camp.

3.8 Gakaara at Karatina Camp(104): February 1958

At Karatina the author met his family after years of separation, but his joy at the reunion was short-lived.

The Government's rehabilitation programme implied that a committee of local loyalists had to pronounce the detainees fit to rejoin the community in their home districts. When Gakaara arrived at Karatina there were conflicts over the allocation of land and the clan elders wanted to deny him his share of land(105). In order to avoid answering his claims they put pressure on the District Commissioner to exile Gakaara. Thus, although he

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(103) Diary p. 197.

(104) The name of the camp, as reported by Gakaara, may be incomplete.

(105) It was not unusual that the loyalists used "Mau Mau" as an excuse to settle old disputes to their own advantage. In the end Gakaara only got seven acres of land (see Diary, pp. 198-9).

had been moved by the authorities along the pipeline, he was rejected by the local loyalists and exiled to Hola Rehabilitation Camp, that is to say at a camp for hardcore detainees.

3.9 Gakaara at Hola Rehabilitation Camp: May 1958 - August 1959

In 1957 the government decided to open an exile settlement at Hola(106). The place was chosen because it was situated in a remote and virtually uninhabited area. The detainees confined there could work on Hola Irrigation scheme, an attempt to bring a large area of desert land under cultivation by bringing in water from the Tana River through a network of canals and irrigation ditches.

Although Hola was generally meant for hardcore detainees who could not be rehabilitated, within the exile settlement there were different arrangements for the cooperators, who had been rehabilitated, but were not acceptable to the loyalists, and for the non-cooperators who had refused to confess their part in Mau Mau(107).

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(106) Hola Camp was built by detainees between 1957 and 1958. For a detailed account of the building of the camp, cf. Muchai, Karigo, op. cit., pp. 69-74.

(107) Cf. Rosberg, Carl G.; Nottingham, John, op. cit., p. 343.

Hola consisted of two camps, an "open camp", which accomodated those people who cooperated with the government by working on the irrigation project, and a "closed camp" for those men who refused to work(108). The former was under the District Commissioner's jurisdiction, whereas the latter was administered by the Superintendent of Prisons.

The detainees who were in the open camp were eligible for an allocation of four acres of land on which they could build a house and were allowed to bring their wives and children under thirteen years of age.

Gakaara became a farmer at Hola and in October 1958 invited his wife and his younger daughter to come and live with him.

The author, apart from working on his plot, organized a camp school for the detainees and his wife became a teacher at the nursery school.

During 1958 the complex of camps scattered all over Kenya began to close down and many of the remaining detainees were sent to Hola. In 1959 the process of rehabilitation continued so rapidly that by the end of

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(108) In September 1957 there were 600 detainees in the open camp and 127 in the closed camp (Wachanga, Henry Kahinga, op. cit., p. 149).

April the number of all Mau Mau detainees was reduced from over 8,000 in 1955 to around 1,000(109).

The progress made in releasing the remaining detainees was marred by the "Hola massacre" in March 1959, which Gakaara relates in his diary, although he did not actually witness it(110). Some detainees, who had been taken to work at the Hola irrigation scheme near the camp, refused to work and were consequently beaten by their guards. Eleven detainees died, many others were injured.

The colonial authorities tried to conceal the real cause of their death, but the truth was soon discovered by the British government.

In June and July 1959 two major debates in the House of Commons were held on the Hola affair. The British government said that all detainees should be released immediately without going along the pipeline. From then on detainees were let out gradually, a few at the end of each month and also those who had not confessed. Some of them decided to stay at Hola and acquired title deeds for the plots they were cultivating.

It is possible that the authorities pushed the clan elders to lift their prohibition, in any case Gakaara was

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(109) Venys, Ladislav, op. cit., p. 85.

(110) Diary, pp. 200-2. For an account of a person who was an eyewitness to the massacre, see: Wachanga, Henry Kahinga, op. cit., pp. 153-44.

released in August 1959. Before leaving the camp, he organized "the performance of some plays" and the detainees "had a farewell dance"(111).

3.10 Gakaara at Restricted at Thaithi Village and Nyeri: August 1959 - May 1960

Gakaara went to live with his family at Thaithi village under restriction. He was not allowed to join any political association or party, he could not cross the boundaries of his administrative location, and had to report regularly to the District Officer and chiefs until the restriction order was suspended.

The final chapter of the diary opens with a long passage on "the disruptive work of the colonialists and their lackeys"(112), which is a repetition of what Gakaara had already explained in the previous chapters in very different language(113). Again, I have the impression that the whole page has been added by the editor, who

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(111) Diary, p. 203.

(112) Ibidem, p. 206.

(113) The choice of words is quite unusual for Gakaara, cf. e.g. "nationalist vision", "historical arena", "unstoppable roar against the oppressors", p. 206.

wanted to "sum up" the significance of the diary and of the Mau Mau struggle in the last chapter(114).

(114) He writes: "The matter of top priority for a released Mau mau detainee, or prisoner, or even a forest fighter who had returned home, was to rehabilitate and restore his affairs to a state of normality. Such affairs lay in wreckage and ruin after many years of the disruptive work of the colonialists and their lackeys. But besides looking after personal interests, a genuine freedom fighter continued to give any possible assistance to the process of liberation to ensure that the fruits of our protracted struggle would eventually be reaped (...)" (p. 206).

4. THE END OF THE STATE OF EMERGENCY AND THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE: 1960 - 1963

4.1 Historical Introduction(1)

The State of Emergency was officially ended on 12 January 1960 by the new Governor of Kenya, Patrick Renison. Among the Emergency regulations abolished were all restrictions on Africans' movement, pass licensing of Gikuyu, Embu and Meru, as well as licensing of presses and publications.

The release of Mau Mau detainees progressed quite rapidly. By May, there were 630 detainees in special camps and 330 under restriction order, and Gakaara among them.

A constitutional conference, presided over by the colonial secretary Ian Macleod, was held in early 1960 at Lancaster House in London and resulted in the Macleod Constitution, which provided for an African majority in the Legislative Council.

In the same year the formation of purely African political organizations on a national scale was authorized. Two major parties emerged: The Kenya African National Union (KANU) and the Kenya African Democratic Union (KADU).

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(1) The references listed at the beginning of 2.1 and 3.1 are again relevant here.

KANU, which was in essence the successor to KAU, was led by James S. Gichuru, Tom Mboya and Oginga Odinga, and represented mainly the Gikuyu, Luo and Kamba peoples.

KADU, headed by Ronald Ngala, Masinde Muliro and Daniel arap Moi, was created to federate the largely rural-based political associations in a defensive coalition of smaller ethnic groups that feared domination by the Gikuyu and Luo, numerically the two major ethnic groups in Kenya.

In 1960 African leaders began to press for the immediate release of Jomo Kenyatta, who was still in forced residence at Lodwar. In May, when he was still in exile, Kenyatta was elected president of KANU, although the action was subsequently disallowed by the government.

Elections under the Macleod Constitution were held in February 1961. KANU won the elections, but refused to form a government until Kenyatta was released.

A temporary coalition government composed of KADU, European and Asian members was formed. In August 1961 Kenyatta was freed and in October was elected president of KANU without administrative objection.

In 1962 Kenyatta became Minister for Constitutional Affairs and Economic Planning in a new coalition government formed out of KADU and KANU.

A general election was held in May 1963 for the new National Assembly. The main contestants were KANU and KADU, but there was also a third party, the African

People's Party (APP), headed by the Kamba leader Paul Ngei. Of the 12 members selected by the National Assembly, 11 were from KANU and 1 from KADU.

The elections brought a few more ex-detainees into the National Assembly, but apart from Kenyatta, only Bildad Kaggia, Fred Kubai, Josiah Mwangi Kariuki, Paul Ngei and Achieng' Oneko were of any prominence.

With the approach of independence, internal tensions went on intensifying. Several Mau Mau leaders were still hiding in the forest and around 90,000 ex-detainees and ex-forest fighters began to ask for future privileges.

About one month before independence, Kenyatta granted amnesty to all prisoners in custody. Amnesty was declared in November 1963 and gave a free pardon to a number of political prisoners as well as to fighters still hiding in the forest(2).

Kenya was granted internal self-government on 1 June 1963 and Kenyatta, as president of KANU, became Prime Minister.

The first group of forest fighters surrendered on the day of Uhuru (in Kiswahili "independence") celebrations on

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(2) At the end of 1963, one of the best organized groups of forest fighters was that led by General Mwariama. He surrendered in December and decided to collaborate with the government of independent Kenya. In the eighties Mwariama helped the Gikuyu singer Joseph Kamaru to collect Mau Mau songs (see Interview, Appendix 1).

12 December 1963, but there were still other guerrillas at large.

When independence came, the peasants who had fought during the Emergency discovered that their poverty was no different from what they suffered in the colonial period and disillusioned Africans started to be critical of their government. The remaining groups of guerrillas refused to leave the forests until they received guarantees of land and assistance.

A new amnesty was announced in December 1964, but the government made it clear that after the expiry date the following month, any people found in unlawful possession of arms and ammunition would be arrested. The amnesty offer produced very little response and the police were sent into action in an extensive operation. The remaining guerrilla leaders were killed and shortly after the activities of the insurgents came to an end.

Former forest fighters and detainees were asking for land on which to settle, as many of them had had their land confiscated by the authorities during the Emergency; some also demanded responsible positions in the government or to replace those Gikuyu civil servants and local officers who had collaborated with the colonial authorities during the Emergency.

The people who had fought in the forests or had been detained during the Emergency thought that independence would mean free land for everybody and at once, but

nothing like that happened and the ordinary Kenyan could see little difference between the former colonial and the new African government.

4.2 The Suspension of Gakaara's Restriction Order: May 1960

In May 1960 Gakaara contacted a lawyer and obtained the suspension of his restriction order. He moved to Nairobi and "collected Mau Mau freedom songs which people used to sing in detention camps, prisons and forests"(3) in order to publish them.

By around 1961, political activity was gaining momentum. A number of vernacular newspapers were started(4), among them, Kirinyaga (Mount Kenya) edited by Kihara Waweru and Agikuyu (The Gikuyu), a weekly by the

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(3) Ibidem, p. 210.

(4) In 1960 a new Books and Newspapers Bill had been introduced, which in addition to requiring that two copies of every edition published should be deposited with the Registrar General, gave powers of search to police officers who suspected that the Ordinance was being contravened, and also demanded a surety of £500 before a paper could be registered. The Bill was opposed by eight members of the Legislative Council who argued that it interfered with the freedom of the press and that its effects would be to prevent Africans from starting newspapers. Asians and Europeans would have less difficulty in raising the £500 surety. The Bill, which was passed in June 1960, fulfilled the government's aim of preventing the re-emergence of a large number of vernacular newspapers (Carter, F., op. cit., p. 257).

politician Josiah Mwangi Kariuki, who was Kenyatta's personal secretary at the time.

The Kenya African National Union (KANU) launched its own paper in Kiswahili, Sauti ya Mwafrika (The Voice of the African), edited by Henry Stanley Gathigira(5).

Gakaara became a member of KANU and, in June 1960(6), "joined Pio Gama Pinto, George Githii and Joe Kadhi on the staff of the KANU party newspaper" in Kiswahili Sauti ya KANU (The Voice of KANU), "which was championing the release of Jomo Kenyatta"(7).

In 1961 the author published the book he had written in detention, Wikumie na Muhiriga Waku (Be Proud of Your Clan), with the Equatorial Publishers which was publishing KANU's newspaper(8).

After a short period he left Sauti ya KANU (The Voice of KANU) in order to take up again his work as an independent publisher and writer, although he remained a strong supporter of KANU and Kenyatta.

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(5) Henry Stanley Gathigira was the son of Stanley Kiama Gathigira. On Stanley Kiama Gathigira, see 1.10.

(6) In both the Gikuyu original and the English translation we find the same mistake in the date, June 1961, instead of June 1960 (cf. Diary, Gikuyu original p. 164 and English translation p. 210).

(7) Ibidem, p. 210.

(8) The book was revised and enlarged in 1967 and published as Mihiriga ya Agikuyu (The Gikuyu Clans).

We have seen in the previous chapter that, even in detention, Gakaara never lost his interest in writing and never stopped being an "author", as he likes to be called. When his restriction order was suspended, he resumed his pre-detention activities as a publisher and a writer of political pamphlets, participating in the general enthusiasm for the building of a new Kenya and actively backing KANU, which embodied the expectations of a new order.

It is not surprising that the writer chooses to end his diary, or rather the autobiographical account which closes his diary, here. He is free, the country is independent, the circle of suffering is closed and it's time to look at the future. Gakaara's last words are full of hope: "We looked forward to creating a new nation and serving in the new independent nationalistic order"(*)

Actually, the diary closes with a brief reflection on Kenyatta and Mau Mau, which I feel "external" to Gakaara's work. It is discussed in the following chapter on the Kenyatta era.

(*) Diary, p. 210.

4.3 Gakaara Publishing Service: Nairobi 1960 - 1964

In June 1960 Gakaara founded his Gakaara Publishing Service in Nairobi and reprinted most of the works he had published as Gakaara Book Service in 1952.

In June 1960, he published a political pamphlet in support of KANU, KANU ni Gitugi gia Kenya (KANU Is the Pillar of Kenya)(9), a brief history of the KANU party, which also contained a speech by one of its founding members, James S. Gichuru, extracts from other leaders' speeches, as well as four political songs.

In 1963 Gakaara brought out a collection of Gikuyu political songs from 1928 to 1963, Nyimbo cia Gukunguira Wiyathi (Songs to Welcome Independence), Nyimbo za Uhuru (Freedom/Independence Songs), a collection of Swahili political songs "which were at that time very popular with the Nairobi youth wing of the KANU party"(10), and Nyimbo za Kushangilia Uhuru (Songs to Celebrate Independence),

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(9) On the front cover of the booklet we read that the work was also available in Swahili translation.

(10) Diary, p. 210. In the diary the title of the Gikuyu collection is incomplete. It appears as Nyimbo cia Wiyathi, instead of Nyimbo cia Gukunguira Wiyathi (Songs to Celebrate Independence), Gikuyu original p. 164. In the English translation the title is also incomplete and it is translated as "Freedom Songs", p. 210. The word wiyathi, means both "freedom" and "independence" (as uhuru in Kiswahili). But it is clear from the context that the songs, published in 1963, were to "celebrate independence" because Kenya became independent that year.

another collection of songs in Kiswahili, in celebration of the independence of Kenya (December 1963).

5. THE KENYATTA ERA AND BEYOND

5.1 Historical Introduction(1)

Since his trial at Kapenguria, Kenyatta had denied any link with the Mau Mau movement(2). Most people thought that he did not want to betray the secret vows of the oath of unity. But, as soon as he was freed, he started

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(1) The bulk of this discussion is drawn from the following sources: Gertzel, Cherry, The Politics of Independent Kenya: 1963-8, Evanston, Northwestern University Press 1970; Kenyatta, Jomo, Suffering Without Bitterness: The Founding of the Kenya Nation, Nairobi, East African Publishing House 1968; Hazlewood, Arthur, The Economy of Kenya: The Kenyatta Era, Oxford, Oxford University Press 1979; Leys, Colin, op. cit.; Murray-Brown, Jeremy, Kenyatta, New York, Dutton 1973; Swainson, N., The Development of Corporate Capitalism in Kenya 1918-1977, London, Heinemann 1980; Wasserman, G., The Politics of Decolonisation: Kenya European and the Land Issue 1960-1965, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1976. There are no comprehensive studies dealing expressly with Kenyan politics in the eighties and early nineties. A useful reference book, containing data up to 1983 is: Rinehart, Robert, et al., Kenya: a Country Study, Area Handbook Series, Washington D.C., United States Government 1984. Unfortunately the five essays contained in the book, written by different authors, are not of equal interest. I found the opening essay on the "Historical Setting" quite superficial, whereas the closing essay by Frederick Ehrenreich on "National Security", which also analyses the political developments in the early eighties, is particularly valuable. Useful information on the eighties and early nineties can be found in articles dealing with Kenyan politics, especially in The Weekly Review.

(2) On Kenyatta's actual connections with the organizers of Mau Mau see: Furedi, Frank, "The African Crowd in Nairobi: Popular Movements and Elite Politics", Journal of African History, Vol XIV, No. 2, 1973, p. 286.

publicly condemning Mau Mau, assuring the British that "the new government of independent Kenya will not be a 'gangster government' and will not deprive people of their property"(3). At the same time he and other KANU leaders were categorically condemning any illegal or subversive movement and urging Kenyans to "please forget about the past and remember we are all citizens of Kenya of equal status"(4). Again, most people interpreted his condemnation of the movement as a clever deception of the British authorities intended to hasten Kenya's independence(5).

In December 1964, on the first anniversary of independence, Kenya was proclaimed a republic, remaining within the Commonwealth and Kenyatta became its first President, elected by the National Assembly, and Oginga Odinga was named his Vice-President.

When independence was attained, there was a great effort on the government's part to focus the achievement of the victory on the charismatic person of Kenyatta, "the Father of the Nation". Kenyatta shifted the aims of the Mau Mau struggle. They had not fought for "land and freedom", but simply to obtain an African government and

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(3) East African Standard, 1 September 1961.

(4) Daily Nation, 2 October 1961.

(5) Cf. Donald L. Barnett's introduction to: Mathu, Mohamed, op. cit., pp. 3-9.

independence was not won through a mass struggle, but thanks to Kenyatta himself and other political leaders. The anniversary of the declaration of the Emergency became significantly "Kenyatta Day".

The leadership of the nationalist movement, representing the embryonic Kenyan bourgeoisie, gained a political settlement which favoured indigenous capitalists(6). KANU stressed the need for close ties with the West, for commercial enterprise and foreign investment and for economic conditions that would attract foreign aid. Ideologically it talked of "African Socialism".

To placate the radicals in KANU who wanted a clear programme for economic development, Kenyatta asked Tom Mboya and Mwai Kibaki(7) to formulate the Sessional Paper Number 10, African Socialism and Its Application to Planning in Kenya. It described African socialism as consisting of "those proven codes of conduct in African societies which have over the ages conferred dignity on our people and offered them security regardless of their situation in life"(8).

At all his public appearances Kenyatta emphasized the necessity of the unity of all ethnic groups for national

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(6) Cf. Swainson, N., op. cit., p. 176.

(7) On Kibaki and Gakaara, see 5.4.

(8) Quoted in: Godia, George I., Understanding Nyayo, Nairobi, Transafrica 1984, p. 14.

growth in the "spirit of Harambee" (in Kiswahili "pulling together"), which became the key-word of his domestic programme.

The idea that there was no need for an opposition in independent Kenya because everybody was "on the same side" and had to "work hard by pulling together" was increasingly mentioned by KANU leaders to justify, among other things, their move towards a one-party system. In 1964 KADU finally dissolved and its members joined KANU.

The resettlement programme was abandoned in 1966, but many peasants who had been squatters on European farms were now squatters on private African land. Thousands migrated to the towns where unemployment was already a serious problem.

In 1966 the KANU leadership split and Oginga Odinga and Bildad Kaggia formed the Kenya People's Union (KPU). This new party was anti-capitalist and claimed to speak for the masses who had been betrayed by independence(9). It had the support of radical students and trade-unionists throughout the country. The party was banned three years later and its principal leaders were detained(10).

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(9) Oginga Odinga's autobiography, published in 1967, is significantly entitled Not Yet Uhuru (uhuru meaning freedom or independence in Kiswahili).

(10) Odinga was released in 1975 and his further attempts to re-enter Kenya politics have been blocked by the government.

A rapid series of constitutional changes carried out between 1963 and 1968 concentrated power in the hands of the government and especially in the person of the President. Constitutional amendments relieved parliament of any involvement in the election of the President and of any say in his conduct and use of power.

The post-colonial state played an important role in providing indigenous capitalists with the advantages denied them during the colonial period. Credit facilities for African enterprises were extended considerably after independence and exchange controls were introduced through the Bank of Kenya in the mid-sixties(11).

The indigenous bourgeoisie, mostly Gikuyu, used state power to further their control over the means of production and to support their investments, first in large-scale agriculture and then in manufacturing. The post-colonial state also acted to ensure the conditions of capital accumulation in general by ensuring civil order and repressing the labour movement, which was obviously to the advantage of both local and foreign capitalists(12).

Kenyatta's steady insistence that private property should be respected, that the settlers should stay and that the colonial government's consolidation of land and

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(11) Cf. Leys. Colin, op. cit..

(12) Cf. Swainson, N., op. cit., pp. 16-17.

wealth in Gikuyuland should be left undisturbed, quickly became the official line of the rest of the leadership and the few, radical KANU leaders, were soon isolated(13).

In December 1977, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, the leading Kenyan author and chairman of the Department of Literature at Nairobi University, was arrested. He was detained without trial at Kamiti Maximum Security Prison for having engaged himself "in activities and utterances" which were "dangerous to the good government of Kenya and its institutions"(14).

Jomo Kenyatta died in August 1978 and the Vice-President Daniel arap Moi took over from him.

When Daniel arap Moi took power he promised to stop corruption. He assured Kenyans that, whilst he would not be making radical departures from Kenyatta's policies, the more blatant iniquities of the old system would be suppressed.

At a political rally the new President said that he would follow Kenyatta's footsteps and soon nyayo ("footsteps" in Kiswahili) became Moi's political slogan

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(13) Cf. Leys, Colin, op. cit., p. 62.

(14) Detention order reported in Ngugi's prison diary, op. cit., pp. 203-4.

which developed into the so-called "Nyayo Philosophy of peace, love and unity"(15).

The new President quickly gathered popular support with moves against corruption in the civil service and against tribal nepotism and he released all political prisoners detained under Kenyatta's regime(16).

In November 1978 Moi reinstated the Preservation of Public Security Act(17) by executive order and without

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(15) In Kenya several books and booklets have been published in praise of "Nyayo Philosophy", see e.g.: Godia, George I., op. cit. and Moi, Daniel arap, Kenya African Nationalism: Nyayo Philosophy and Principles, Nairobi, Macmillan 1986. In 1989 the government introduced a new course required for all university students, "Nyayo Philosophy". Considerable sums of public money were spent erecting monuments to "Nyayo" all over the country to celebrate the "ten years of Nyayo" in 1988.

(16) Ngugi wa Thiong'o was released thanks to the amnesty in December 1978, but he was not allowed to resume his post at University. He started working at Kamiriithu Community and Educational Centre (near Limuru) with Ngugi wa Mirii. In March 1982 the authorities stopped public rehearsals of Maitu Njugira (Mother Sing for Me), a play directed by Ngugi, and destroyed the open-air theatre. Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Ngugi wa Mirii were forced into exile. The story of Kamiriithu's experience is narrated in detail in: Bjorkman, Ingrid, Mother, Sing for Me: People's Theatre in Kenya, London, Zed 1989.

(17) The Preservation of Public Security Act was passed in 1966 during Kenyatta's government. It conferred on the chief executive basic powers to issue special regulations - subject to certain constitutional limits and controls by the National Assembly - at any time "it appears to the President that it is necessary for the preservation of public security" (Kenya Gazette, quoted by Frederick Ehrenreich in R. Rinehart et al., op. cit., p. 239). The Preservation of Public Security Act is extensively discussed in: Kibwana, Kivutha, Fundamental Rights and Freedoms in Kenya, Nairobi, Oxford University Press 1990, Chapter Six, pp. 63-9.

ratification by Parliament. This order introduced amendments to the act which allowed for stricter regulations, for detention without trial and for restriction orders.

In June 1982, the Constitution was amended by an act of Parliament to make Kenya a de jure one-party state.

Several university students and lecturers were detained in June 1982, among them Maina wa Kinyatti, a history lecturer at Kenyatta University College(18), who had edited Gakaara's diary(19). He was arrested for alleged association with the Mwakenya underground movement (Muungano wa Wazalendo wa Kukomboa Kenya, "Union of Patriots for the Liberation of Kenya" in Kiswahili), charged with possession of a seditious publication, which

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(18) Kenyatta University is one of the four universities in Kenya. The University of Nairobi was first established in 1951 as the Royal Technical College of East Africa. From 1964-70 it was part of the University of East Africa and in 1970 became the University of Nairobi. Kenyatta College, about twenty miles from Nairobi, was created in 1972 as a teachers' training college, became an independent university in 1985. Moi University in Eldoret town was established in 1984, and has now become an independent university. Egerton College, near Nakuru town, was an old colonial agricultural college which was converted into a university college in 1985; it became a fully fledged university two years later. In the early eighties the University of Nairobi was considered the centre of radicalism and Moi began to shift resources away from the University of Nairobi to Kenyatta University and Moi University in Eldoret in Western Kenya (the President was born near Eldoret).

(19) On Kinyatti, see 2.10. On Kinyatti and Gakaara, see 3.3, 3.7, 5.2.

he claimed the police had planted on him, and sentenced to six years in prison(20).

In an atmosphere of increased political tension members of the Kenyan Air Force (KAF) attempted a coup d'état(21). On August 1, they seized control of the Voice of Kenya radio station in Nairobi and announced that they had overthrown the government.

Before the government overpowered the rebels many civilians were killed and rioting and looting spread throughout Nairobi.

Many people were arrested and charged with offences ranging from rioting to sedition(22). KAF was disbanded and most of its 2,000 personnel were detained on suspicion of complicity in the coup.

The secret ballot was abolished in 1988 and a new procedure, the so-called "queueing", was introduced. Thus, to choose KANU candidates in primary elections in 1988,

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(20) Kinyatti was released in October 1988 and left the country for the United Stated shortly after.

(21) Arguably, the best survey of the facts relating to the attempted coup, which also contains a brief but penetrating political analysis, is that by Frederick Ehrenreich in: Rinehart, Robert et al., op. cit., pp. 241-4.

Gakaara dedicated three issues of his Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine (Nos. 28, 29 and 30) to the adventures of wa-Nduuta, the protagonist of his stories, at the time of the coup (see 11.1).

(22) In July 1985 twelve people who had been accused of involvement in the coup attempt were executed.

voters had to line up in public behind the candidate of their choice.

In July 1990 the police did not grant permission for a public rally in Nairobi of the advocates of a multi-party system, but thousands of people went to the gathering anyway. The police tried to disperse the crowd and the gathering turned into riots that over the next few days spread to the Central Province.

At the end of July 1990 great hopes were attached to the KANU Electoral Review Committee which had been formed to listen to citizen's views on the party's electoral system.

In 1990 the political debate in Kenya was focused on the issue of multi-partyism. In fact, what emerged from the proposals submitted to the KANU Electoral Review Committee was that the citizens wanted more democracy and major political changes, first of all the introduction of a multi-party system.

In 1991 two important political changes took place. First the secret ballot was restored, then, in December, the constitutional amendment which made Kenya a one-party state was abolished and opposition parties permitted. They are preparing to oppose KANU in the general elections in 1992.

5.2 Gakaara and Kenyatta

The author closes his prison diary with a praise for Mau Mau fighters and a criticism of Kenyatta's policy, which does not follow on from his previous statements and strongly contradicts his political position in the sixties as set out in his works published in that period. Again, this part appears to have been strongly influenced by the editor. Moreover, as happens in all the "explanatory" parts of the diary, the English translation is particularly "free".

In the last part of the diary Gakaara(?) criticizes Kenyatta's resettlement programme. We read in the English translation of the work:

> "When the vast and fertile settler farms started to change hands, the Mau Mau fighters could only sit as spectators while wealthy Africans, the new "Smiths", took over thousand-acre farms from the white Smiths (...) the Mau Mau watched as wealth changed hands, but also as power and office changed hands. For homeguards and loyalists were forgiven for the terroristic and inhuman acts they had committed against freedom fighters as well as the abuses they had subjected them to. But this was not the end; for those very good servants in the colonial administration were readily absorbed into the government administration of nationalist Kenya (...) The Mau Mau fighters were pained to witness the fulfillment of this taunt [sic!]. But they subdued their agonised spirits and learnt how to work and live with these government administrators and workers who had been faithful servants of British imperialism and colonialism but were now conveniently serving an African nationalistic government (...) They had to accept the sacrifice of their political and material aspirations. Their aspirations for active participation in the nationalist government, which they had been instrumental in making a reality, fell

> into the river of history. And national gratitude in the form of magnanimous gestures to individual Mau Mau fighters or in the form of memorials to the movement was quite absent, for such gestures had few champions and many detractors(23) (...) And so in this great historical sacrifice and sacrificing, the Mau Mau became that proverbial farmer who is denied a meal. The Gikuyu have this saying: 'It is not the farmer who eats the food he has grown(24)'"(25).

From a stylistic point of view, the rhetoric of the above passage is not typical of the author's writings and only the proverb at the end can be considered a feature common to his works. The content is even odder, if we

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(23) The absence of monuments in praise of Mau Mau fighters has been lamented both by Maina wa Kinyatti and Ngugi wa Thiong'o in their writings (see e.g. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, op. cit., 1983, p. 7).

(24) The whole passage (from "and so..." to "...a meal") is not found in the Gikuyu original (cf. p. 212), where we simply read: Mugikuyu oigire: Murimi ti we murii, literally meaning: "The Gikuyu says: The Farmer Is Not the One Who Eats", or "One Sows and Another Reaps". The additions to the English text are many and may be due not so much to the translator, as more probably to the editor.
On the one hand the editor(?) added words and passages especially to the English translation (although we have already noted that, even in the Gikuyu original, we find terms like "imperialist" and "colonialist" before the names of British officers, which seem "foreign" to the text and to Gakaara's style) and , on the other hand, he eliminated from the English edition the terms of respect which Gakaara uses before Kenyatta's name (common to all his writings) because they would have shown the author's admiration for the President and "weakened" the criticism expressed in the passage. Thus Mugathe ("His Excellency") and Muthee ("Elder", in Kiswahili Mzee) "disappear" in the English translation, where we simply find "Kenyatta" (cf. Gikuyu original p. 165 and English translation p. 211), except for the first time his name appears where we read "Mzee Kenyatta" (English translation, p. 210).

(25) Diary, pp. 211-2.

compare the passage to the works that Gakaara published in the sixties and especially Nyakinyua Muteti (Nyakinyua the Political Activist)(26).

As we shall see later on in the study of the narrative, Nyakinyua, the main character, is the mouthpiece for the President and she even uses Kenyatta's very words to address her listeners. Through Nyakinyua the author endorses the main principles of Kenyatta's policy, such as economic growth ("wealth is our major aim"(27)), Harambee ("if you start doing something for yourselves in the spirit of Harambee, the government will help you"(28)) and African socialism ("ours is a socialist government which means that we must be friends to one another"(29)). He also refutes the arguments of the radical politicians by justifying the one-party system ("there is no political struggle because we all fought for independence and we got

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(26) Nyakinyua Muteti (Nyakinyua the Political Activist), Atiriri Series No. 4, Nairobi, Gakaara Book Service, March 1967.

(27) This is the title of the author's preface to the book (Ibidem, p. 1). The drawing on the front cover shows Nyakinya carrying a sheet of paper with the slogan Wiyathi na Utonga, "Independence and Wealth". Gakaara has always attached a great importance to wealth, cf. e.g. Mageria Nomo Mahota (Make an Attempt in Order to Succeed); a revealing quotation from this booklet is reported in 3.6.

(28) Nyakinyua Muteti (Nyakinyua the Political Activist), p. 10.

(29) Ibidem, p. 15.

it"(30)), unemployment ("we cannot be choosy about work"(31)), landlessness ("go to a landowner and cultivate for him"(32)) and poverty ("we must work with rich people so that we can also get rich"(33)). He even writes that "Kenyatta was the one who brought independence"(34) and that "monuments should be built to commemorate the leaders of KCA and also for the Mau Mau"(35).

5.3 Gakaara Book Service and the Atiriri Series: Nairobi 1966 - 1967

In 1966 Gakaara founded Gakaara Book Service(36) in Nairobi and started the Atiriri(37) Series. It was planned

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(30) Ibidem, p. 2.

(31) Ibidem, p. 14.

(32) Ibidem, p. 14.

(33) Ibidem, p. 6.

(34) Ibidem, p. 6.

(35) Ibidem, p. 7 (my emphasis).

(36) We have seen earlier on in this study that in the sixties Gakaara had published several works as Gakaara Publishing House (see 4.3). He had decided to change the name of his publishing house, originally Gakaara Book Service, because of the political problems he had in the fifties with the colonial government. After independence he could resume the old name of his publishing house.

(37) Atiriri is a Gikuyu interjection used to draw attention to the speaker and means "I say", "listen to me", or "listen to this".

as a monthly series to contain short pieces of fiction as well as articles on general subjects such as health, business and psychology.

In the inside cover of his first publication, Ni Nii Ndina Nyarwimbo (Me and Nyarwimbo), brought out in December 1966, the author explains that:

> "The booklets of the Atiriri Series will be published every month. Each booklet will contain an original short story, which has never appeared before, and useful information about important issues such as business, farming, things regarding the home and the customs of the [Gikuyu] people"(38).

I would like to stress the fact that the issues tackled by Gakaara in the Atiriri Series, as well as his didactic aims, are not different from those contained in pre-independence vernacular periodicals and in Muigwithania (The Reconciler) above all. Even the length of his booklets, an average of twenty pages, is the same as that of most vernacular magazines and publications(39), the only difference of lay-out being the inclusion of drawings(40).

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(38) Ni Nii Ndina Nyarwimbo (Me and Nyarwimbo), Nairobi, Gakaara Book Service, Atiriri Series No. 1, December 1966, p. 1. For the English translation of the booklet, see Appendix 2.2.

(39) On Muigwithania (The Reconciler), see 2.6.

(40) Unfortunately, no studies of Gikuyu periodicals printed in the forties and early fifties have been

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In my view, it is important to see Gakaara as an "exceptional" case of a writer and publisher in Kenya (and Africa in general) and at the same time acknowledge the "continuity" of a certain tradition in writing and publishing in Gikuyu which goes back to the forties. We should emphasize this aspect as Gakaara's activities cannot be correctly assessed in a void(41).

If we see Gakaara as part of that tradition, it would be logical to ask why he, the "political writer" of the forties and fifties, turned to fiction writing in the sixties. But, at that time, he had just started writing fiction and for the moment he was not sure whether he was going to continue with it. In this light the Atiriri Series can be seen as a sort of "literary apprenticeship", which would influence his future choices. Since it would only be in the seventies that Gakaara decides to become a "writer of fiction", I shall limit myself to raising the subject briefly now and shall deal with it fully in the next chapter.

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published so far, so I cannot exclude the possibility that some of them contained drawings. I can say that all the political pamphlets I examined did not contain any illustration.

(41) This is the reason why I have decided to present Gakaara's activities chronologically and discuss them in the framework of Gikuyu politics, literature and history.

For the moment we can single out two possible reasons for his being encouraged to go on writing fiction(42), the first is the short story writing course he had taken while in detention, and the second the prize he had received two years before starting the Atiriri Series. In 1964 Gakaara had been awarded the second prize in a contest called a "Creative Short Story Competition", sponsored by the East African Literature Bureau, with a short story in Gikuyu "Ndikenjerwo Mbui Mucii Uyu", (I Won't Be Shaved in This House)(43).

In January 1967 Gakaara published the second number of the Atiriri Series, Ndugeta Ungi Maraya (Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute), which would prove particularly important in Gakaara's career. We shall see later on in this study that in the seventies he chose the protagonist of this story, Kiwai wa-Nduuta(44), as the hero of a long series of adventures, which became extremely popular.

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(42) The only piece of fiction he had written by then was Uhoro wa Ugurani → (The Story of a Horseride) in 1946 (see 2.4).

(43) See 1.11.

(44) In the second and third issue of the Atiriri Series Gakaara writes the first name of the protagonist as Kiwae, then he writes it as Kiwai, which is the correct spelling. There is no particular reason for putting a hyphen after wa, which means "son of", or "daughter of" (literally "of"), but since Gakaara had started writing it in this way, he went on using the hyphen in all the wa-Nduuta stories which followed.

The actual story contained in Atiriri Series No. 2 is preceded by two articles, the first on psychology and the second, addressed to shop-owners, on "How to Improve Business"(45).

The article on inferiority complexes or, to use the expression coined by Gakaara, "self-created diseases"(46), originated from the "lectures" on psychology given to him and other fellow detainees by another detainee, Muinga Chokwe(47). We have already seen how, while in detention, Gakaara tried to use his time profitably by studying,

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(45) On Gakaara's didacticism, see also 5.5.

(46) Mirimu wa Kwiigirira: is a new expression created by Gakaara to mean "inferiority complexes". I translated it "self-created diseases" to retain the etymological meaning. Kwiigirira is a reflexive verb (from kuiga, "put", "place"), meaning "to hoist a load onto the head".

(47) Muinga Chokwe was a leading member of the KAU. Gakaara includes Chokwe's name in the list of KAU members who were arrested at the declaration of the State of Emergency (Diary, Appendix 1, p. 215; on Chokwe see also: Wachanga, Henry Kahinga, op. cit., pp. 11-12). Chokwe was at Kajiado Detention Camp, Manda Island Detention Camp and Takwa Detention Camp with Gakaara. They both signed a petition to the Minister of Community Development on 24 September (Diary, p. 119 and p. 249). Chokwe was also among the very few people who were receiving a correspondence course (Ibidem, p. 103) and it may perhaps have had something to do with psychology (I asked Gakaara, but he cannot remember). Chokwe was transferred to Hola (Wachanga, Henry Kahinga, op. cit., p. 150) just like Gakaara, but Gakaara does not include him in the list of the "old friends" he met again at Hola (Diary, p. 199). After independence Chokwe became an MP (Interview, Appendix 1), but I do not know about his present activities. Brief references to Chokwe's post-independence activities can be found in: Kaggia, Bildad. op. cit., pp. 185-7 and Odinga, Oginga, op. cit., p. 222 and p. 258. On Chokwe see also 3.5.

writing and organizing the camp-school. But still, he and his friends tried to find a constructive way to spend their idle hours. Thus, they decided to have "somebody tell the others what he knew" and to then discuss the topic together(48). They particularly enjoyed Chokwe's talks on psychology(49).

In 1966, when the author founded his Gakaara Book Service, a former fellow detainee visited him and advised him to publish Chokwe's lectures. He brought Gakaara some notes that he had taken in detention and they "sat down together, translated the notes(50), and wrote out" the articles on inferiority complexes(51). The author says that his readers liked the articles and "talked a lot about them"(52) and this is probably the reason why he decided to publish them in a single volume in 1974(53).

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(48) Interview, Appendix 1.

(49) Ibidem. In the diary Gakaara does not mention the discussions they had with Chokwe.

(50) Chokwe was a Giriama and gave his "lectures" in Kiswahili.

(51) Interview, Appendix 1.

(52) Ibidem.

(53) Kihonia kia Mirimu ya Kwiigirira (How to Cure Inferiority Complexes), Karatina, Gakaara Press 1974; rev. enl. ed. Mirimu ya Kwiigirira (Inferiority Complexes) 1979. Parts of the booklet appear in Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine Nos. 15, 16, 17, 18 and Atiriri Series No. 2 (see 11.1 and 11.2).

The second and last article on the inferiority complexes appeared at the end of the following issue of the Atiriri Series, Ungihonoka... no Tuhikanie (If You Become a Christian... We'll Get Married), published in February 1967. The booklet also contained the follow-up to the story which had appeared in the previous issue of the Atiriri Series. Gakaara's need to continue that story shows that from the very beginning he felt particularly "inspired" by the characters he had presented and especially by the protagonist, the troublesome but good at heart wa-Nduuta, who was to become the hero of so many other stories.

Nyakinyua Muteti (Nyakinyua the Political Activist), which has been presented earlier on in this study, appeared in March 1967 and was the fourth publication of the Atiriri Series.

The fifth booklet to be issued was a new impression of Gakaara's first work of fiction(54), Ngwenda Unjurage (I Want You to Kill Me). This was the last publication of the Atiriri Series. Unfortunately it is not dated, but it must date from April 1967.

In 1967 Gakaara decided to end the Atiriri Series and revive Waigua atia?, the magazine he had been editing

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(54) See 2. 4.

before he was arrested in 1952(55). We read on the back cover of Ngwenda Unjurage (I Want You to Kill Me): "An erstwhile magazine called Waigua atia? [What's the News?] is also being prepared to be published twice a month. It will contain stories and different types of information(56)". But Gakaara soon changed his mind and abandoned the project(57).

5.4 Gakaara Press: Karatina 1971 -

In the sixties Gakaara was a well-established writer and publisher. He would have been able to earn his living had it not been for the high costs he had to meet in printing his books. He decided therefore to ask for a loan to set up a printing firm.

In 1965 he went to the Gikuyu politician Mwai Kibaki, who was the then Minister of Finance and Economic Planning(58), and explained to him that he wanted to

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(55) See 2.6.

(56) Ngwenda Unjurage (I Want You to Kill Me), Nairobi, Gakaara Book Service, Atiriri Series No. 5, 1967, p. 2.

(57) We shall come back to this issue in 5.5.

(58) In the forties Mwai Kibaki was a KAU politician. He was detained during the State of Emergency, but I do not know much about his years in detention as the only author who mentions him is Josiah Mwangi Kariuki. He writes that in 1956 Kibaki was at Lodwar Detention Camp, in Northern Kenya, and that in 1960 he became KANU Executive Officer

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"write, publish and print" his books because "the Indians(59) were charging" him "too much and were consuming" all his money(60).

Kibaki told Gakaara that, if he wanted to get a government industrial loan, he had "to move either to Nyeri or Karatina"(61), because those were the areas scheduled for industrial development in Gikuyuland(62).

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(op. cit., pp. 115-6 and 168). Kibaki got a first class B.A. in Economics at Makerere University College. Then he went to the London School of Economics. He became a lecturer in Economics at Makerere, then went back to Kenya and was elected KANU's Executive Officer (on Kibaki at Makerere see: Ngugi wa Thiong'o Writers in Politics, London, Heinemann 1981, p. 95). When Kenya was declared a republic in 1964, Kibaki became Minister of Finance and Economic Planning. Gakaara knew Kibaki because he had met the politician several times at KANU offices when he was working for the KANU newspaper Sauti ya Kanu (The Voice of KANU) in 1961. Mwai Kibaki became Vice-President when Kenyatta died in 1978, but soon the new President, Daniel arap Moi, who has always been suspicious of Gikuyu, replaced him with a man from his own ethnic group (the Kalenjin). Kibaki has been the Minister of Health for many years. Nowadays he is the leader of a newly-formed party, the Democratic Party (DP). On Kibaki see also 5.1.

(59) Gakaara printed the Atiriri Series with Staetger Printers in Nairobi. His last book to be printed with a Nairobi printer was Agikuyu, Mau Mau na Wiyathi (The Gikuyu, Mau Mau and Independence) in 1971, with Thomson Press. I do not know whether these two printing firms were actually owned by Indians, or whether they were run by Indian personnel.

(60) Interview, Appendix 1.

(61) Ibidem.

(62) In the sixties Nyeri and Karatina were the major centres in Gikuyuland. Nyeri has a long history, whereas Karatina has only recently risen in importance and surpassed Nyeri. In 1902 the British built a fort on Nyeri

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The Minister advised Gakaara to "buy a few machines and start printing", then, he promised, the government would give some financial help(63).

Gakaara moved to Karatina in 1967 and the following year he founded, with other partners, the Karatina Printing Press. But he soon realized that he was not free to publish what he wanted and decided to start his own printing firm with a few old machines and the small amount

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Hill and called it Fort Nyeri. Soon it became an administrative and commercial centre. In 1911 Nyeri was proclaimed a township and the following year it became the headquarters for the Province of Kenya and for the district of Nyeri. A railway station connecting Nairobi with Nyeri was completed in 1927. The station was opened at Kiganjo, about ten miles from the township and in the middle of the European settled area. The effect of this was that Karatina village, situated twenty miles away from Nyeri at the very centre of a rich agricultural area, and Nanyuki, the centre of the settlers' areas, handled most of the local trade. Due to boundary changes, Nyeri was made the capital of the Kikuyu Province in 1924 and then capital of the vast Central Province in 1933. Nyeri was particularly important during the Emergency. As most Mau Mau activities were concentrated in that area, Nyeri became the headquarters of two brigades and thousands of soldiers, police and homeguards were stationed there. In 1961 the boundaries of what came to be the Republic of Kenya underwent a further change which led, two years later, to the present division into six regions plus the Nairobi area. By 1965 these new regions were redesignated as provinces. Nyeri remained the capital of the Central Province, which includes the districts of Kiambu, Murang'a, Nyeri, Nyandarua and Kirinyaga. Nowadays Nyeri is in great decline, whereas Karatina, with its famous market (possibly the largest market in Kenya) and its big matatu (private transport) station, has become the most important town in the Central Province. For a brief history of Nyeri and an interesting study of its social composition, see: Dutto, Carl A. op. cit..

(63) Interview, Appendix 1.

of start-up capital he had received from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning in 1966.

In August 1971 Gakaara produced Agikuyu, Mau Mau na Wiyathi: 1 (The Gikuyu, Mau Mau and Independence: 1), the last book to be published by Gakaara Book Service and to be printed by a Nairobi printer. In the same month Gakaara brought out the second part, Agikuyu, Mau Mau na Wiyathi: Gicunji gia Keeri (The Gikuyu, Mau Mau and Freedom: Part Two), which was the first book published and printed by "Gakaara Press: Publishers, Printers & Booksellers"(64), the new and current name of his publishing house.

In the same year he brought out Nyimbo cia Ihii (Dances and Songs for Youth) using for the first time new typographic characters which included the i and u with tilde, and thus marking the difference between the close i and u and the half-close i and u (with tilde)(65). Since then all his booklets have been printed in that way(66).

In 1971 Gakaara decided to enlarge his business. He wanted to build a printing house in the industrial area of

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(64) Gakaara wa Wanjau, Agikuyu, Mau Mau na Wiyathi: Gicunji gia Keeri (The Gikuyu, Mau Mau and Independence), Karatina, Gakaara Press, August 1971, p. 1. On p. 61 Gakaara announced that a third part of the book was to be published, but it never came out.

(65) On Gikuyu orthography, see 6.3.

(66) For a complete list of the books published by Gakaara in the early seventies, see 11.

Karatina (which is still unfinished) and to buy more printing machines. His younger brother, Joseph Gatuiria, who was the then Managing Director of the Industrial Development Bank of Kenya, encouraged him to obtain a loan from the Industrial & Commercial Development Company (ICDC), a Kenyan government-backed body. He was to pay the shares and to join Gakaara as co-director of the renewed firm, but unfortunatly he was killed in a road accident in Mombasa before paying his shares and since then Gakaara has been struggling hard to repay the loan by monthly instalments(67).

In order to earn some more money, Gakaara has been using his machinery not only to print the books published by his Gakaara Press, but also to do typographic work, such as printing invitation cards and stationery material. In spite of that, he does not want to be considered a printer because he does not know "much about printing"(68). He prefers to be called a writer and publisher, or, in his own words, "an author"(69).

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(67) On the ICDC loan, see also 5.11.

(68) Interview, Appendix 1. Gakaara eldest son, John Wanjau, is going to take over from his father in the printing firm and is at present learning typography.

(69) Ibidem. Gakaara's headed paper reads: "Gakaara wa Wanjau Author & Publisher".

5.5 Gikuyu and Mumbi Magazine: 1976 - 1985

We have seen earlier on in this study that in 1967 Gakaara abandoned the project of the Atiriri Series with the intention of starting a magazine; in the early seventies he went back to the old project of running "a monthly magazine, a general magazine"(70).

In November 1972 he started the monthly Gikuyu na Mumbi (Gikuyu and Mumbi) in tabloid-newspaper format, but four years later he stopped the publication. He realized that "it did not sell well because people were not interested in what they had already read in the daily newspap Possibly Pos people thought that people thought that the political situation had completely changed after independence and felt that there was no longer the need for a vernacular independent and free press in an independent and free country. Only in recent years, as a reaction to the increasing censorship of the press, have we witnessed the rise of an independent press, although on a much smaller scale, with underground publications in English and Kiswahili denouncing the workings of the "neo-colonial" government(72).

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(70) Interview, Appendix 1.

(71) Ibidem.

(72) In the early eighties the "December 12 Movement" .../

In independent Kenya Gakaara could no longer be and did not want to be "a political author". From this point of view Nyakinyua Muteti (Nyakinyua the Political Activist) had been his "political testament" and his last work addressed to the same audience he had written for in the fifties, that is to say the politicized Gikuyu petty bourgeoisie.

Nyakinyua, the mouthpiece for Kenyatta and for Gakaara, had clearly stated:

> "Don't call me a political activist. There is no longer any need for politics(73) because we all fought for independence and we've got it. Now we must go ahead and build a 'New Kenya'. Those who used to call me a political activist(74) should now call me a lover, or an overseer, or a leader of the country's affairs"(75).

From Nyakinyua's words it is clear that in 1967, when Gakaara published the booklet, political militancy was

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started distributing its publication Pambana. In 1981 Independent Kenya by "Cheche Kenya" started circulating; it was published in 1982 by Zed Press. In 1986-7 the underground movement Mwakenya widely distributed its pamphlets Draft Minimum Programme and Register of Resistance. They also started a news-sheet, Mzalendo Mwakenya.

(73) Uteti: "complaining", "grievance" and also, in a more general sense, "politics".

(74) Muteti: "one who complains", "representative", "politician" . Just as uteti, "politics", muteti has the connotation of somebody who is in politics to "complain" about an unjust situation.

(75) Gakaara wa Wanjau, op. cit., March 1967, p. 2.

considered a kind of anti-government activity(76). Thus the writer's preoccupation with finding "safe" terms to define a politician in independent Kenya, because muteti (politician) had the connotation of "somebody who puts forward complaints" and in the "new Kenya", according to Nyakinyua/Gakaara/Kenyatta, there was apparently nothing to complain about.

We have seen earlier on in this study that Nyakinyua Muteti (Nyakinyua the Political Activist) strongly backs Kenyatta and his policy. Through Nyakinyua, Gakaara not only asserted that there was no longer a need for political debate, but he went even further by endorsing Kenyatta's line that enrichment, rather than equal distribution of wealth, was the ultimate goal for Kenyan citizens and for the Gikuyu in particular who "are not lazy"(77). We should not forget that Gakaara had also practical reasons too for endorsing Kenyatta's line as he himself had profited from the government's policy of

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(76) We have seen in this chapter that the government was taking stronger steps to silence opposition. 1966 had been a particularly critical year. Oginga Odinga had been removed from the post of Vice-President and had founded the Kenya's People's Union (KPU), which was banned three years later (see 5.1). Starting from 1963 a rapid series of constitutional changes and admendments was made. In particular, in 1966 the Preservation of Public Security Act was passed (see 5.1).

(77) Gakaara wa Wanjau, op. cit., March 1967, p. 7.

favouring Gikuyu entrepreneurs and had set up his printing firm with a government loan(78).

What could a "political author" do in a country where there was no longer a need for politics? He could merely "oversee" and thus describe the new society in his books, that is to say write stories which mirrored the "New Kenya".

The other question Gakaara was confronted with was whom to write for. We have already seen in this section that he was aware that the "old people", who had supported the Gikuyu press in the forties and fifties, could now "read the news in the national daily newspapers" and would not be interested in a "general magazine" in Gikuyu. He knew that they would not buy his stories either, because "old people are not good readers"(79), or rather not "good readers of fiction".

If on the one hand those people who had been educated at mission-schools in colonial times were not used to reading fiction, on the other hand, the highly educated Gikuyu élite, who had gone to Alliance High School (and also the few among them who had completed their studies abroad) were not interested in stories in Gikuyu either,

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(78) See 5.4.

(79) Interview, Appendix 1.

as they had access to English literature and were more likely to buy books by "famous" foreign authors.

If Gakaara wanted to go on writing, there was no other option for him than to address the younger generation.

In the seventies the number of literate and educated people had increased(80). By then a greater number of young people had access to schools and were interested in reading books.

We may say that Gakaara, who at the beginning of his literary career had been a "political author", the spokesman for a restricted group of people - those Gikuyu who could read in the forties and fifties - became in the seventies a "popular" author, writing for the growing number of literate Gikuyu, mainly secondary-school leavers, "from twenty to thirty years of age"(81).

In the seventies Gakaara was mostly known to his new audience for his fictional writings of the Atiriri Series.

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(80) In 1944, about 22% of the population over 15 years of age was literate (in any language, including vernacular languages). In 1972, about 40% were literate; some 62,000 adults were enrolled in 810 government-aided and 450 unaided literacy classes, most of them run by churches. In 1968, 61% of all children of primary school age were enrolled in school. In the 1969 census, 27.1% of the whole population including children (or 59.1% of those aged 15-19 years) had, or were having school education; 72.9% had had none (Barrett, David B. et al., op. cit., p. 335).

(81) Interview, Appendix 1.

Thus, when he decided to start a periodical, he "thought of a magazine with stories to attract readers"(82).

Another reason for his wanting to start a magazine was that he could then advertise the books he published without having to pay for expensive advertisements in the national daily newspapers(83).

Gakaara brought out the first issue of his Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine (Gikuyu and Mumbi Magazine) in paperback format(84) in August 1976 and he has published forty-two issues so far with several interruptions(85).

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(82) Ibidem.

(83) Ibidem.

(84) This was also the title of a periodical published in the early fifties, see 2.6.

(85) No. 1 was published in August 1976, No. 2 in September 1976, No. 3 in October 1976, No. 4 in November 1976, No. 5 in December 1976, No. 6 in January 1977, No. 7 in February 1977, No. 8 in March 1977, No. 9 in April 1977, No. 10 in January 1978, No. 11 in February 1978, No. 12 in March 1978, No. 13 in April 1978, No. 14 in May 1978, No. 15 in June 1978, No. 16 in July 1978, No. 17 in August 1978, No. 18 in January 1979, No. 19 in July 1980, No. 20 in August 1980, No. 21 in December 1980, No. 22 in January 1982, No. 23 in February 1982, No. 24 in March 1982, No. 25 in April 1982, No. 26 in May 1982, No. 27 in June 1982, No. 28 in 1982 (I do not know the month of publication), No. 29 in January 1983, No. 30 in 1983 (I do not know the month of publication), No. 31 in March 1983, No. 32 in July 1983, No. 33 in August 1983, No. 34 in December 1983, No. 35 in January 1984, No. 36 in February 1984, No. 37 in April 1984, No. 38 in May 1984, No. 39 in November 1984, No. 40 in May 1985, No. 41 in 1985 (I do not know the month of publication) and the latest issue No. 42 in December 1985. For further data, see 11.1.

Though many people told him that "a magazine in Gikuyu would never sell"(86), it turned out to be a success. Gakaara began by printing two thousand five hundred copies and, after a few years, he increased to three thousand copies, which were sold throughout Gikuyuland, in Nairobi and in the other urban centres where there is a large Gikuyu community, such as Eldoret and Mombasa(87).

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(86) Interview, Appendix 1.

(87) The lists of sellers, which Gakaara often publishes on the back covers of the magazine, are particularly revealing. On the back cover of Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 6 (January 1977) there is a list of six sellers, all in Nairobi. On the cover of No. 8 (March 1977), twenty-one sellers are listed in all the main centres in Gikuyuland (Nairobi excluded) as well as Embu, Meru and Eldoret. On that of No. 14 (May 1978), thirty-two sellers (of which twelve in Nairobi). The same list appears on the covers of No. 15 (June 1978), No. 16 (July 1978), No. 17 (August 1978), and No. 18 (January 1979). Twenty-six sellers are listed on the back cover of No. 24 (March 1982), five of which in Nairobi and the others in the main centres of Gikuyuland as well as in Eldoret and Meru. On the back cover of No. 25 (April 1982) we find the same list to which one seller in Nyeri was added totalling twenty-seven sellers. The same list is printed on the back covers of No. 26 (May 1982), No. 27 (June 1982), No. 28 (January 1983), No. 32 (July 1983), No. 33 (August 1983), No. 34 (December 1983), No. 35 (January 1984) and No. 36 (February 1984). A new list of twenty-six sellers, six of which in Nairobi appears on the cover of No. 37 (April 1984). The same list as in No. 36 is printed on the back cover of No. 38 (May 1984). The same list as in No. 37 on that of No. 40 (May 1985). I do not have copies of Nos., 3, 5, 7, 28, 30. The copy in my possession of No. 41 is not the original, but a reprint dated June 1990 (see also 11.1).

In 1978 in his editorial for Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 11, significantly entitled "Gikuyu and Mumbi [Magazine] Is Loved Very Much", Gakaara proudly remarks:

> "When Gikuyu na Mumbi was started one year ago, some people thought that it was not important because it is in Gikuyu. And they went even further and said that the Gikuyu language is not loved and a magazine in Gikuyu would not work (...).
>
> We have been very pleased to see that the Gikuyu have supported us happily, thus showing respect for our language.
>
> We ask our readers, wherever they are, never to stop giving us their views, so that we can write stories and things to please them"(88).

The success of Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine lies in the fact that it has been tailored to the needs of the new readership. The average number of pages in his booklets, twenty pages, is aimed at those Gikuyu who cannot spend much time on reading and who are not likely to be attracted by the long and less straightforward works of "intellectual" authors. Furthermore, the low price of Gakaara's booklets, three Kenya shillings each (five pence)(89), can be easily afforded by people who cannot

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(88) Editorial, Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 11, February 1978, p. 1.

(89) The price of the magazine was initially two Kenya shillings, then, starting from No. 21, it was increased to three shillings "due to the rise in the cost of paper" (Editorial, Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 21, December 1980, p. 1). The price was increased by one shilling, starting from No. 29, January 1983 (I do not have a copy of No. 28, thus I do not know whether it cost three or

.../

pay forty-five shillings or more for a book and who hardly ever visit bookshops(90). In fact, Gakaara's booklets are more likely to be found in markets, in the book-stalls(91), in stores and in stationers' in Gikuyuland(92) than in Nairobi bookshops(93) because they are distributed through different channels from those normally used by the established publishing houses.

Gakaara's open didacticism also mirrors the change in his readership. Each story has a moral which can help young people to face the difficulties of everyday life. Besides, all narratives strengthen the importance of the traditional Gikuyu code of behaviour as a means of solving these difficulties.

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four shillings). Starting from No. 39, November 1984 the price was increased again by one shilling. After a long interruption which started in 1985, Gakaara wanted to revive the publication and, in 1990, he reprinted No. 41 and No. 42, the price being eight Kenya shillings.

(90) When Gakaara's diary was published by Heinemann in 1983 it cost forty-five Kenya shillings, whereas, in the same year, Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine cost four.

(91) In Nairobi the second-hand book-stalls were concentrated around Tom Mboya Street and it was possible to find a few of Gakaara's booklets, especially his textbooks, there. Unfortunately, the police have driven away the book sellers apparently "to clean up the town", but more probably because they feared that anti-government material was on sale.

(92) The list of sellers that Gakaara often publishes on the back cover of the magazine is particularly revealing on this regard.

(93) The prison diary and the Gikuyu primers are the only works by Gakaara which can be found in Nairobi bookshops.

According to Gakaara "the teaching and Gikuyu customs" are the most important aspects of his writings(94). In his editorial for No. 1, he explains that "the magazine will contain important stories about the way people live and many other things which can help our readers"(95).

Gakaara's editorials always appear on the first page(96), and tell the readers what they are going to find in that issue, and also give other information about other books published by Gakaara Press.

As in the case of Gakaara's previous publications the quality of the paper is very poor because the author has always tried to keep down costs. The cover is of thin cardboard in matt colours(97), which differ from issue to issue, and the front cover always has a drawing by J.

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(94) Interview, Appendix 1.

(95) Editorial, Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 1, August 1976, p. 1. Only the first issue includes also some final remarks, underlining the moral of the story and the "useful information" contained in it (p. 20). For an English translation, see Appendix 2.5.2.

(96) The only exception being No. 15, June 1978 which, instead of the usual editorial, contains an obituary of Jomo Kenyatta, who died in June 1978.

(97) Only the cover of No. 23 (February 1982) is pink and heavier paper. Instead of the usual black ink, also blue and red ink were used too. I do not know why, but, possibly, Gakaara tried to improve the quality of the printing and, after one number, realized it was too expensive and went back to the usual lay-out.

Kimaru, illustrating the title of the story. He also drew the covers of the Atiriri Series(98).

The magazine features the serialized adventures of Kiwai wa-Nduuta, the "man of the street", who cannot help getting into trouble, but always slips out of it thanks to his common sense which mostly springs from his profound knowledge of Gikuyu traditions. Nowadays his stories have become so popular that the magazine is commonly known as "wa-Nduuta" and Gakaara himself as "the author of wa-Nduuta"(99).

The wa-Nduuta stories, just like those contained in the Atiriri Series consist of narratives dealing with problems of morality. They are written predominantly in the form of dialogue, which has always been the strong point of Gakaara's writings. The straightforward narration is a deliberate stylistic choice on the author's part to adjust his writings to the needs of his new audience among younger readers.

In 1952 Gakaara had published a beautiful lyrical work written in verse which was presented in a

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(98) Only the first two issues contain a few more drawings. I do not know about No. 3, as I do not have a copy. Numerous drawings (thirteen) appear in Wa-Nduuta Hingo ya Paawa (Wa-Nduuta at the Time of the Coup) which collects in a single volume Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine Nos. 28, 29 and 30 (see bibliography of Gakaara's works).

(99) Gakaara said that some people jokingly call him "wa-Nduuta" (Interview, Appendix 1).

metaphorical and complex style, Marebeta Ikumi ma Wendo (Ten Love Poems), but it did not sell well. In 1972 he brought out a revised and enlarged edition under the title Mawendo Mithemba 16 (16 Kinds of Love), but also his new readership did not seem to appreciate it and sales again were poor. Since the publication of this booklet Gakaara has never written any other poetry because he was discouraged by the cold reception. The booklet remains to date Gakaara's "worst seller".

As Gakaara remarked, "the new generations, especially those people who were born in town, were not acquainted with Gikuyu traditions"(100) and, moreover, their knowledge of the Gikuyu language would not have allowed them to understand fully, and to appreciate, a highly metaphorical form of the language. Stylistic complexity of a text would have compromised the successful communication of the message and hence the comprehension of the moral which is crucial to the author.

We shall now examine the characteristics of the Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine(101). First of all, as it only contains the adventures of Kiwai wa-Nduuta, the term

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(100) Interview, Appendix 1.

(101) I could not find copies of Nos. 3 and 5. Gakaara did not have copies either. He gave me his proof-reading copy of the story for No. 3, thus, in my discussion of the characteristics of the magazine I could not take into consideration the editorial, advertisements, etc. contained in No. 3 and 5.

"magazine" should not be understood in its usual sense of a periodical with stories and articles by various authors, but simply as a series. Gakaara chose to call it a magazine (using the English word "magazine") to establish a constant dialogue with his readers, stressing that it was not an occasional publication, but a periodical published at fixed intervals of time(102).

At the same time Gakaara was not satisfied with the term "periodical" or "series" or "magazine" to define Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine and he tried to explain to his readers that there was much more in it. As didacticism was, and still is, in Gakaara's own opinion the most important aspect of his writings, he did not want his readers to think that it featured simply "stories". He felt the need to stress the fact that all his "stories" mirrored "the daily activities of people" and contained "teachings" that could help them. In his editorial entitled "Gikuyu na Mumbi Is a Magazine(103)" he explains:

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(102) This was at least Gakaara's intention. We have seen earlier on in this study that the publication underwent several interruptions, some of them fairly long.

(103) This time Gakaara uses the Gikuyu word ngathiti, which means "periodical", "magazine", from the English "gazette".

"The editors of Gikuyu na Mumbi(104) have realised that some of their readers do not know that Gikuyu na Mumbi is a magazine. They think that it is a monthly booklet containing the wa-Nduuta stories.

There are many different types of magazines. There are some which are daily and others which are weekly. These types of magazines are called "newspapers" in English and they give information on current affairs.

There are other types of magazines which are called "magazines" in English. They come out every week, every fortnight, every month, every three months, or even every six months. Most of them contain opinions, different types of information, different types of teachings and even funny stories, just like Gikuyu na Mumbi.

Other types of periodicals are called "journals" and deal with matters concerning certain groups of people in the society. For example, there are some for women only, some for teachers, some for doctors, for businessmen, for young people etc.

Gikuyu na Mumbi is a magazine featuring stories that portray the daily activities of people, such as the stories of wa-Nduuta and others. Each story has its own basic teaching and because of that, whenever you read this magazine, be sure that you will always find a teaching.

Gikuyu na Mumbi is the only magazine of this kind and we thank all our readers for their support wherever they are(105)".

At first Gakaara intended to publish stories by other authors too. He writes in his editorial for No. 1:

"Your Ideas Are Money

The work of Gakaara Press is widely known as it has been publishing a lot of things in the Gikuyu language for many years.

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(104) Actually Gakaara has always been the only editor, but he uses the first person plural in all his editorials.

(105) Editorial, Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 12, March 1978.

> Gakaara Press intends to pay writers for their original short stories. The length of your short stories must be 4,500 - 5,000 words. Do not send a story which you copied from another book or magazine.
>
> The story must be written in a clear handwriting or typed.
>
> If we buy the story, it will remain the property of Gakaara Press, but the name of the author will be always printed.
>
> If possible, write a story containing a certain teaching which can be universally accepted. This does not mean that you cannot write whatever you want.
>
> Let the story of Jeneti and Kiwai wa-Nduuta be an example of the kind of story we want"(106).

Actually only Nos. 2, 7 and 14 contain stories by other authors as Gakaara probably did not receive suitable material for his magazine(107). In fact, in the interview he complained that, although young people have "good ideas", they lack the "skill in writing" and their manuscripts cannot be published(108).

As we have already noted, advertising is an important aspect of the magazine, as at least three pages (usually

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(106) Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 1, p. 21. In No. 11 (p. 20) Gakaara wrote a similar advertisement asking for contributions for the magazine.

(107) Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 2 (pp. 17-20) features a story by K.E. Gichuhi from Nairobi with a drawing by the author, entitled "Gathamai Kuonio Nganga Mbute ni Mundu wa Nja" (Gathamai Was Taught a Lesson by a Woman). The ending was published in No. 3, but I could not read it as I do not have a copy of the magazine. No. 7 (pp. 16-19) contains a story, "Mundu Wanja Ugwati" (A Dangerous Woman) by a reader from Nairobi, Maita wa G. and No. 14 (pp. 13-18) "Mbaara iria Yaciarire Wendo" (The Fight that Brought about Love" by Nginya Ndegwa from Nyahururu (a small town not far from Karatina).

(108) Interview, Appendix 1.

five or six), out of an average number of twenty pages in each issue, are devoted to the advertisements of books written or published by Gakaara, whereas advertisements put in by other people hardly ever appear(109).

Apart from actual advertisements, Gakaara has always used other subtle ways to publicize his books. We often find excerpts from other books by Gakaara to induce the readers to buy them(110). He includes for instance parts of the booklet on inferiority complexes, or "self-created diseases", explaining in the editorial that they are also published in a single volume and that "the booklet contains very important information which concerns everybody, as it is said that 'prevention is better than

(109) More advertisements by other people appear in the later issues of the magazine as Gakaara decided to advertise the businesses of his sellers free of charge. The only advertisements of books by other authors (which were not published by Gakaara Press) are the ones which appear on the back cover of No. 19 (July 1980), advertising Ngaahika Ndeenda (I Will Marry When I Want) by Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Ngugi wa Mirii and Caitaani Mutharaba-ini (Devil on the Cross) by Ngugi wa Thiong'o. This is particularly revealing as Gakaara advertised their books in the period in which he was associating with them (see 5.6 and 5.9).

(110) No. 15, June 1978 (p. 13 and 15-18), No. 16, July 1978 (pp. 16-18), No. 17, August 1978 (p. 17) and No. 18, January 1979 (pp. 16-17) contain excerpts from the booklet on inferiority complexes or "self-created diseases".

cure'. You will find this booklet wherever you buy Gikuyu na Mumbi"(111).

Another subtle way of advertising his books is the dialogue between two women published in Nos. 6 and 7, where one woman tells the other that she can find useful information on certain issues in Gakaara's books and gives her the titles(112). Similarly, a whole number of the magazine, No. 37(113), is dedicated to wa-Nduuta at a teachers' party where some teachers stand up and say how useful they have found Gakaara's primers.

Gakaara has always tried to induce his readers not only to purchase his other books, but also to go on buying the magazine, for instance by publishing the end of a story in the following issue.

He also tried to get them to buy back numbers by publishing brief and exciting summaries so that "whoever likes the stories can find out which numbers they missed and can buy them"(114). Besides, secondary characters often recur in the stories and Gakaara always refers to

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(111) Editorial, Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 16, July 1978, p. 1.

(112) Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 6, January 1977, pp. 17-20 and No. 7, February 1977, pp. 19-20.

(113) Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 37, April 1984.

(114) Editorial, Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 8, p. 1. See also Appendix 2.1.

their other appearances by adding "See Number ..." to fire the readers' curiosity.

Another way of getting his readers to buy back issues was the prize-competition he announced in Nos. 12 and 13 in 1978 . The prizes ranged from money to books printed by Gakaara Press (again good publicity!) (115). In No. 14 he published the questions that his readers had to answer in order to take part in the competition, explaining that:

> "(...) The questions are simple for those who have been reading the magazine every month (...). All the questions refer to the stories published from the first issue up to this month's. Because of that, if you haven't got every copy, you won't be able to answer the questions"(116).

In No. 17 Gakaara decided to include the readers' letters so that they could exchange ideas on various topics(117). But, for some reason, he actually published

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(115) Cf. Editorial, Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 13, April 1978, p. 1.

(116) Editorial, Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine, No. 14, May 1978, p. 1. The rules for entry to the competition are reported on p. 18 and the questions on p. 19. The rules and questions also appear in No. 15, June 1978, pp. 19-20, and No. 16, July 1978, pp. 19-20. The names of the winners are published in No. 17, August 1978, on p. 19 and the answers to the questions on p. 20.

(117) Cf. Editorial, Gikuyu na Mumbi No. 17, August 1978, p. 1.

the readers' letters only in a few issues of the magazine(118).

In 1984 Gakaara went back to the project of publishing stories by other authors and including general articles in his magazine. He also thought of printing paid advertisements. At the end of No. 39 he announced:

> "Gikuyu na Mumbi Will Change in 1985
>
> We inform our readers that from next year 1985 we hope to add new topics to this magazine. Our idea is to open our magazine to the national and tribal developments. Just as before wa-Nduuta stories will continue to be featured.
>
> These new topics will include: advice on good farming methods, how to keep livestock, business, education, law, law suits, Gikuyu culture and many others.
>
> Anybody who sends a story or any other literature, from which our readers can benefit (about 2,000 words), will be rewarded.
>
> N.B. only those who write a complete story or an article on a topic will be rewarded, not letters to the editor. We hope that our readers will contribute fully to the "new" Gikuyu na Mumbi.
>
> There will also be a chance to advertise small and big businesses (...)"(119).

Unfortunately, as we shall see later on in this study, events were to force Gakaara to interrupt the publication of the magazine.

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(118) No. 17, August 1978, contains two readers' letters on p. 18; No. 18, January 1979, three letters on p. 18; No. 25, april 1982, two letters on p. 16; No. 26, May 1982, one on p. 17.

(119) Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 39, November 1984, p. 15.

5.6 Gakaara and Ngugi

In 1980 Ngugi wa Thiong'o, whose main concern had then become the use of Gikuyu, contacted Gakaara and gave him some of his manuscripts to read. They discovered that they were using a different orthography, especially in marking the length of vowels. Thus, they decided to have regular meetings with the Gikuyu linguist Karega Mutahi and other people interested in the subject in order to establish a correct Gikuyu orthography, which they could all follow(120).

It was then that Ngugi learned about Gakaara's diary and his interest was awoken. He talked to Maina wa Kinyatti, who was doing research on the Mau Mau movement, and both encouraged Gakaara to publish his prison diary with Heinemann. As we have already seen in this study, Maina wa Kinyatti "volunteered to edit it" and also suggested an eventual English translation(121).

The manuscript was also given to the Gikuyu writer and scholar Micere Githae Mugo, who was in London at the

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(120) For further discussion on this topic, see 6.3 and 6.5.

(121) See 3 (esp. 3.3) and 5.9.

time(122). She became later on a member of the committee that awarded Gakaara the Noma.

Ngugi and Maina wa Kinyatti must have shown a keen interest in all Gakaara's pre-independence writings, as precisely in the period he was in contact with them, Gakaara published an advertisement in Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 23 asking for copies of books he had published in the fifties before his arrest:

> "Thanksgiving Prize of 100 Shs
>
> If you have a leaflet which was published in 1952 by Gakaara Press and entitled Witikio wa Gikuyu na Mumbi [The Creed of Gikuyu and Mumbi], we need it soon because of the history of our children(123). Other books of that time will be rewarded with 20 Shs and you will be also given new books. The old books we want are [a list of ten titles follows]. Send them to Gakaara Press (...)(124)".

Actually, two of the works included in the list, Mageria Nomo Mahota (Make an Attempt in Order to Succeed) and Witikio wa Gikuyu na Mumbi (The Creed of Gikuyu and

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(122) Micere Githae Mugo, former Chairman of the Literature Department at Nairobi University, is now in exile in Zimbabwe.

(123) Gakaara uses the word Historia (with capital h), from the English "history". On writing Historia ya ciana ciitu, "the history of our children", he probably means "because it is important for our children to know our recent history".

(124) Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine, No. 23, February 1982, p. 18. In No. 24 (March 1982) Gakaara put another advertisement asking only for Witikio wa Gikuyu na Mumbi (The Creed of Gikuyu and Mumbi) on p. 19.

Mumbi) were later included in the diary, and it would be interesting to know whether Ngugi and Maina wa Kinyatti intended to reprint other titles too.

5.7 The Noma Award: 1984

We have seen that, had it not been for Ngugi and Maina, Gakaara would not have been able to publish his manuscript with Heinemann. Again, it was only with the help of Kenyan exiles(125) that his diary was duly publicized and given the Noma Award in 1984. Unfortunately, their interest in Gakaara's work attracted the attention of the Kenya police, more than that of the international audience(126).

Gakaara was awarded the Noma in August 1984 and travelled to Zimbabwe and Japan. In November he wrote a long account of the prize-giving ceremony, in which he could not hide his satisfaction for the public recognition that he had long deserved:

> "Gakaara wa Wanjau Was Awarded a Prize for His Book Entitled <u>Mau Mau Author in Detention</u>
>
> The Kenyan writer Gakaara wa Wanjau had brought fame to Kenya by receiving an international prize for

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(125) By that time Ngugi had left Kenya.

(126) On this topic, see 3.3.

his book. The prize-giving ceremony was held in the big town of Harare (Zimbabwe) on 29-8-84.

Another African who received the prize was Njabulo Ndebele. He is a lecturer in the University of Lesotho, in Southern Africa. Gakaara and Ndebele received Kshs 30,000 each and a plate for their talent.

Detained on 20/10/1952

The honour of giving these prizes had been granted to President Canaan Banana of Zimbabwe. In his speech during the ceremony, he praised Gakaara and said that he had been a freedom fighter in the struggle for independence. He also praised Gakaara's ability to recollect the events which enabled him to write his book. He said that Gakaara had written his diary while in detention camps during colonial times. He said that Gakaara did it for seven years while in detention(127).

President Banana told his audience that, before Gakaara had been arrested on 20-10-52 (at the same time as Muthee(128) Jomo Kenyatta), he had published freedom songs, which encouraged Mau Mau freedom fighters, and also many other things which helped to free Kenya from the colonial yoke.

Gakaara was detained by the colonial government, because he was a strong supporter of Mzee Jomo Kenyatta, the leader of Mau Mau. He was charged with writing seditious publications.

Award from Japan

This is the prize called the 'Noma Award'. It comes from a very rich Japanese who has a big printing firm in Tokyo. This press is known as 'Kodansha Publishers Limited' and its owner, Soichi Noma, died in February 1984. His son Koremichi Noma has now become the director of his father's business.

Because of his love for literature, he [Soichi Noma] set up a fund to award money and prizes to leading African authors. He started this in 1979 and his fund came to be known as the 'Noma Award for Publishing in Africa'. He donated the 100,000 US dollars which are given every year to African

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(127) Gakaara actually kept his diary from October 1952 to April 1956, see 3.7.

(128) Muthee: term of respect literally meaning "elder", same as Mzee in Kiswahili.

authors. Gakaara and Njabulo Ndebele were the fifth to receive this award. Gakaara was the first Kenyan to receive this award in 1984.

Translation into Shona

This award-giving ceremony coincided with an exhibition known as the 'Zimbabwe International Book Fair'. This was where Gakaara went with the publishers of his book, Heinemann Educational Books (EA) Ltd There he met His Excellency the Prime Minister of Zimbabwe Robert Mugabe.

After Gakaara gave a copy of his book to His Excellency, he told him that he would have been happy if the book was translated into Shona, one of the languages of the country.

The Beginning of His Career: 1946

Gakaara started writing books in 1946 after the Second World War (1939-1945). During the war he went to Ethiopia, Somalia and Madagascar.

His first book was Ngwenda Unjurage [I Want You to Kill Me], which is still many people's favourite book. He has now written over thirty booklets and books, such as Mihiriga ya Agikuyu [The Gikuyu Clans], Nyimbo cia Ihii [Songs/Dances for the Youth], Mageria Nomo Mahota [Make an Attempt in Order to Succeed], Agikuyu, Mau Mau na Wiyathi [The Gikuyu, Mau Mau and Independence], Nyimbo cia Wiyathi [Freedom Songs], Mawendo Mithenba 16 [16 Kinds of Love], Thooma Giigikuyu Kiega: Ibuku ria Mbere [Learn Good Gikuyu: Book One] and Thooma Giigikuyu Kiega: Ibuku ria Keeri [Learn Good Gikuyu: Part Two] and many others. He is also the writer of the monthly magazine Gikuyu na Mumbi [Gikuyu and Mumbi].

Gakaara is the owner of a printing firm in Karatina town which is called Gakaara Press Limited. This firm also prints business books, invoices, bus and matatu tickets, posters, invitation cards, office stationary and many other things.

What the Book Is About

The writer Gakaara wa Wanjau responded to the thanks [of the Prime Minister?] and said that the book Mau Mau Author in Detention was written in the Gikuyu language.

He said that the book gave a vivid description of mistreatement in detention camps, explaining also how the detainees endured all that in the hope of independence.

He said that his book was of importance to all those black people who had brought independence to

> Kenya and to all Africans in general, especially Zimbabwean citizens who had gained their independence after a war as it happened in Kenya"(129).

After reporting Gakaara's own description of his prison diary, it will be interesting to see how Gakaara's work was assessed by the Committee that awarded him the Noma. They defined the book as:

> "(...) a resistance fighter's prison diary (...) the single most significant historical document of the entire resistance literature from Kenya (...) The account "is remarkable because, although it emerges as a lucidly moving document, it was written under the most arduous conditions of colonial detention, and in great secrecy. It nevertheless sets new standards in the use of Gikuyu as a medium for the transmission of complex ideas. Gakaara's expert use of the Gikuyu language and the ease with which his narrative flows makes the work beautiful to read"(130)

The statement that Gakaara's diary is "the most significant historical document of the entire resistance literature from Kenya" is arguable because there are many other important life-stories, written or dictated by Mau Mau fighters or written by Gikuyu politicians(131).

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(129) Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 39, November 1984, pp. 15-20.

(130) "Kenyan and South African Joint Winners of 1984 Noma Award", African Book Publishing Record, Vol. X, No. 2, 1984, p. 78.

(131) For a list of writings written or dictated by Mau Mau fighters, see 3.3.

It is also questionable to say that in his diary in particular Gakaara "sets new standards in the use of Gikuyu as a medium for the transmission of complex ideas" because the language of his diary is very much on a pair with his other writings. Moreover, the Gikuyu language has been used "to transmit complex ideas" from ancient times, as Gikuyu oral literature is rich in riddles and proverbs; let alone the fact that written Gikuyu has been used to explain complex religious concepts (translations of the Bible and commentaries) and also to express modern political concepts in the vernacular press before independence.

From the above we can see how important it is to see Gakaara as part of a tradition, instead of insisting on his "uniqueness" and on the exceptional relevance of his diary in particular.

In this respect Gakaara's own account of his literary actvities is much more accurate. He explained that he had started writing in the forties and that he was the owner of a printing firm. He also underlined that he had written different kinds of works, including fiction and textbooks, and that his diary was not the only book he wrote in praise of the struggle for independence.

Gakaara expressed once again his "moderate" views, insisting on the importance of Kenyatta and identifying

the Mau Mau movement with him(132), something totally unacceptable to the Kenyan exiles who had pressed for the publication of the diary to further a completely different interpretation of the Mau Mau struggle(133).

5.8 Gakaara's Arrest: April 1986

The months which followed the awarding of the Noma constituted a very difficult period for Gakaara.

On 21 April 1986 he was arrested for alleged association with the Mwakenya underground movement. He was released three weeks later after signing a confession where he stated that:

> "Ngugi promised me that he would assist me with a new printing machine because the one I had was small. I was naturally attracted by the idea to the extent of not knowing the future repercussions (...) At one time Maina wa Kinyatti and Ngugi visited me at Karatina to see my manuscript [of the diary]: Maina agreed to re-edit the manuscript and also have it translated into English free of charge (...) I strongly believe that Micere Mugo and another Kenyan (name unknown), who were members of the committee, influenced my award and invitation to the Zimbabwe Book Fair. Having said the above, I would like to disassociate myself completely from the activities of Mwakenya, a secret movement whose motives, to say the least, are diabolical and without direction. My loyalty to HE the President, the government and

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(132) On Kenyatta and the Mau Mau movement, see 5.1 and 5.2.

(133) For a brief discussion of Mau Mau historiography, see 3.3.

KANU, of which I am a sublocational chairman, remains as strong as ever (...)"(134).

Gakaara's confession was of considerable importance to the police. In fact, for the first time, the names of Ngugi and others had been mentioned in connection with Mwakenya. Till then nobody arrested for alleged association with the movement had admitted they were actually members(135) and, moreover, none of them had publicly accused others of being part of it. Only four years later Ngugi made a public announcement declaring he was a member of Mwakenya(136).

5.9 Gakaara's Accident: May 1985

In May 1985 Gakaara was in a bad car crash. He stayed in hospital for three months and for a long time he was unable to look after his publishing house and to keep up the publication of his Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine.

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(134) "Wanjau's Statement", op. cit., p. 8.

(135) When Maina wa Kinyatti was released in October 1988, he was interviewed in Nairobi by the Financial Review and, again, denied any connection with Mwakenya (Financial Review, October 31, 1988, pp. 14-6).

(136) Ngugi made his statement in early July 1990 when the government was accusing him of being in the "shadow cabinet" and was dismissing the protests for democracy as "the work of drug addicts and hooligans". Ngugi's statement was reported in several newspapers, see e.g.: "Activist Artist", West Africa, 6-12 August 1990.

5.10 Gakaara's Textbooks: 1980 - 1992(137)

Since his accident and arrest Gakaara has not written fiction, but concentrated on revising the Gikuyu textbooks for primary school which he had first published in the early eighties(138). His primers have been approved by the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) and "are selling very well"(139).

These textbooks, in Gakaara's words, "help Gikuyu children and sell better than fiction"(140). Nowadays the author wants to be considered "first of all an expert in the Gikuyu language"(141).

Gakaara started his literary career as a "political author" for a restricted group of politicized and literate Gikuyu. He then shifted his interests to fiction writing for the young generation to help them to face everyday life with the "teaching" contained in his stories. Lastly,

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(137) For an analysis of Gakaara's textbooks, see 6.6.

(138) The series, of five booklets in all, is entitled Thooma Giigikuyu Kiega (Learn Good Gikuyu). He first published the first three booklets in 1980 and revised them in 1988. He wrote the last two booklets of the series in 1986 and revised them in 1988. In January 1991 he added three booklets to the series, to be used along with his primers Mwandikire wa Giigikuyu Karing'a (Let's Write in Pure Gikuyu). See also 11.10.

(139) Interview, Appendix 1.

(140) Ibidem.

(141) Ibidem.

he became more and more concerned about the possible "disappearance" of Gikuyu in the face of the dominance of the English language and turned to the younger generation in order to help them to "Learn Good Gikuyu"(142).

5.11 Gakaara in the Early Nineties

At present Gakaara is in a difficult financial situation and he may be forced to close down his business. Moreover, his permit to publish his Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine may not be renewed.

In mid-1990 the Special Branch police came to Gakaara's printing firm, asked questions about his political position, and searched his office. Shortly after Gakaara was denied the annual permit for publishing his Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine without any explanation and his lawyer is still trying to get the renewal.

Gakaara has serious economic difficulties to face too. As we have seen earlier on in this study, in 1971 he asked the Industrial & Commercial Development Corporation (ICDC) for a loan to buy new printing machines and to build the present Gakaara Press premises(143).

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(142) This is the title Gakaaara chose for his series of primers, cf. note 138).

(143) On the ICDC loan, see 5.4.

Nowadays the machinery owned by Gakaara Press consists of two offset printing machines, one platemaking machine and the letter press machines. There is also the actual building, which holds the production workshops, binding section, stores, offices and a show-room. The staff comprises fifteen people, three technicians, two administrators (Gakaara and his eldest son, John Wanjau Gakaara), one salesman and one caretaker.

Since Gakaara obtained the ICDC loan, he has been struggling hard to repay the loan by monthly instalments, but his business cannot raise enough income to repay the loan as scheduled and at the same time allow him to continue with his business. Thus, the arrears have been accumulating month by month.

In August 1990 the ICDC communicated to Gakaara that their previous arrangement of repaying the loan by monthly instalments was no longer acceptable to them and they asked him to pay 50% of the outstanding sum at once. At first the ICDC accepted Gakaara's counter-proposal of increasing the monthly instalments, but after on year they again asked him for the 50% of the outstanding debt and threatened to put his business into receivership.

Thanks to the help of sympathetic institutions and friends, Gakaara was able to collect a considerable sum of money to give to the ICDC, which, at least for the moment, has agreed to postpone the payment of 50% of the sum Gakaara owns them.

The closing down of Gakaara Press would mean the end of the only independent Gikuyu literature in Kenya and would be a tragedy for Gakaara, an author who has dedicated his whole life to literature and who "cannot live without writing, without helping" his people(144).

(144) Interview, Appendix 1.

PART II:

GAKAARA AND HIS WRITINGS

6. GAKAARA AND THE GIKUYU LANGUAGE

6.1 Introduction

Gikuyu is spoken by the Gikuyu people who number about seven million and make up the largest ethnic group in Kenya.

The Gikuyu inhabit the Central Province and five administrative districts: Nyeri to the north, Nyandarua to the north-west, Kirinyaga north-east, Kiambu south, and in the middle Murang'a, which is traditionally considered to be the ancestral homeland of the Gikuyu people(1). They also constitute the majority of the Nairobi population and are present in considerable numbers in all urban centres.

Gikuyu belongs to the Bantu division of African languages. The correct name of the people and their language is Gikuyu. The form Kikuyu was adopted by the Europeans from the Swahili inhabitants of the coast. The proper spelling should be Mugikuyu (singular), Agikuyu (plural) for the people, Gikuyu for their country and Gigikuyu for their language.

Gikuyu is also the name of the founder of the tribe. His wife is called Mumbi, which means "moulder" or

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(1) Arguably, the most valuable history of the Gikuyu is Godfrey Muriuki's op. cit., 1974. For a bibliography of studies on the Gikuyu people, see Appendix 3.3.

"pot-maker". The expressions ciana cia Muumbi (the children of Mumbi), ciana cia Gikuyu na Mumbi (the children of Gikuyu and Mumbi), or ciana cia Gikuyu (the children of Gikuyu), are commonly used to designate the Gikuyu people. Instead of ciana (children) the word nyumba (house) can be used.

Gikuyu is spoken with relatively little dialectal variation over the whole of its range. People from Nyeri, Murang'a and Kiambu will readily distinguish the dialect of the others, but the dialects are mutually intelligible. Among neighbouring languages Gikuyu is most closely linked to Kimeru, Kiembu, Kikamba and it has relatively close affinities to Kiswahili.

Before examining Gakaara's interests in the Gikuyu language, let us introduce the linguistic features which are relevant to our discussion(2).

(2) 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4 are only meant to introduce Gakaara's linguistic and orthographic concerns. For further discussion on the Gikuyu language, see the works listed in the bibliography of studies of the Gikuyu language, Appendix 3.1 and in particular: Barlow, Ruffell A., op. cit., 1960 and Benson, T.G.; Kahahu, P.S., A Kikuyu Course, University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies 1970.

6.2 Vowel Sounds in Gikuyu

Seven vowels are recognized in the standard orthography: a, e, i, o, u, ĩ [with tilde], ũ [with tilde].

Front Vowels:	close i: hiti 'hyena' half-close ĩ [with tilde]: miti 'trees'
	half-open e: tene 'old times'
Central Vowels:	open a: mara 'intestines'
Back vowels:	half-open o: mbogo 'buffalo' half-close ũ [with tilde]: kuguru 'leg' close u: ndutu 'jigger'

These vowel may be short or long (sometimes, in emphatic speech, very long).

6.3 Gikuyu Orthography

The current Gikuyu orthography was established in 1947 by the United Kikuyu Language Committee (UKLC).

Before that date the Protestant and Catholic missionaries working in Gikuyu land had been using two different orthographies in their books and schools.

The Protestant missionaries had adopted the so-called "Westermann" system which recognized seven vowels: a, e, i, o, u, and ĩ and ũ with tilde, respectively for the half-close i and half-close u. The Catholic missionaries

had been using the so-called "Nyeri orthography" which employed only five vowels and did not distinguish between half-open e and half-close i with tilde and half-open o and half-close u with tilde.

The Catholic missionaries argued that the introduction of i with tilde and u with tilde was of "no advantage for the writing and reading, much less for the printing of books in Kikuyu"(3).

Various attempts were initially made to obtain agreement on a standard orthography. In 1934 the missions concerned, meeting in a government-sponsored committee, agreed upon the adoption of the "Westermann" system, but this, after being gazetted as the officially recognized orthography, was not generally adopted(4).

In 1947 proposals were submitted by the Rev Lyndon Harries advocating a new method of vowel-marking approved by the International African Institute, for East African seven-vowel Bantu languages. Representative meetings were again convened by the government, and finally the question

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(3) Merlo Pick, Vittorio, op. cit., 1973, p. 18. See also by the same author: "Alla ricerca di un alfabeto per i kikuyu" (Looking for an Alphabet for the Gikuyu), Missioni Consolata, gennaio 1952, pp. 16-18. The author, a Consolata Father, was a member of the UKLC.
Recently I met Catholic missionaries who still argued that the system adopted by the committee "succeeded only in creating confusion".

(4) Barlow writes that "the system proved unacceptable to Africans", but he does not explain in detail (cf. Barlow, A. Ruffell, op. cit., 1960, pp. v-vi).

was referred to some educated Gikuyu leaders, who then declared themselves in favour of the "Westermann" system previously rejected. In 1949 the government ruled that the existing UKLC orthography should be adhered to.

6.4 The Writing of Double Vowels(5)

In the current orthography vowels which are normally pronounced as one long vowel are written as double only in two cases:

(a) when, for grammatical reasons, two similar vowels come together

Ex. eguuka, "he is coming" (where e- is the verb subject prefix, gu- the tense prefix and -uka the verb stem)(6).

Exceptions occur in the case of the possessive particle -a and the personal possessive pronouns:

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(5) Cf. Barlow, op. cit., pp. 4-5 and Benson and Kahahu, op. cit., p. 3.

(6) On the verb in Gikuyu, see esp. Barlow's grammar.

Ex. a-a, "of" (for nouns of Class 2)(7)

ma-a, "of" (for nouns of Class 6)

a-akwa, " my " (for nouns of Class 2)

ma-akwa, " my " (for nouns of Class 6)

For convenience they are written a, ma, akwa, makwa(8).

(b) to indicate length in a limited number of word stems where confusion might arise from the existence of pairs of words with different meanings, similarly spelled and distinguished only by vowel length and dissimilar tones(9):

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(7) For a discussion of noun classes in Gikuyu, see the works by Barlow and Benson and Kahahu. For a very interesting description of the ideas associated with each class, see L.S.B. Leakey's First Lessons in Kikuyu, Nairobi, The Eagle Press 1959 (Kenya Literature Bureau 1978), pp. 1-21.

(8) Cf. Barlow, op. cit., p. 4.

(9) In Appendix II Barlow adds a list of common words with long-root vowels, in which the long vowel is indicated to avoid possible confusion with similarly spelt words in which the root-vowel is short (Barlow, op. cit., pp. 258-9). For an introduction to tone in Gikuyu, see Benson and Kahahu (op. cit., pp. 76-7 and 91-5) and A. E. Sharp's "Guide to the pronunciation Indicators Following the Entries" which precedes Benson's Kikuyu-English Dictionary, Oxford, Clarendon Press 1964 (pp. xiii-xlix). The only specific work on Gikuyu tonal structure is: Lilias Eveline Armstrong's The Phonetic and Tonal Structure of Kikuyu, London, Oxford University Press 1940 (repr. Dawson of Pall Mall 1967).

Ex. -hota, "be able" -hoota, "overcome"

-keena, "tie tightly" -kena ,"be happy"

6.5 Gakaara and Gikuyu Orthography

Gakaara has always been extremely concerned about the educational aspect of his writings. If in the sixties and seventies he intended "to teach proper behaviour and Gikuyu customs"(10) to the younger generation, in the eighties his interest shifted to "teaching good Gikuyu"(11) to Gikuyu children and nowadays he wants to be considered "above all an expert in the Gikuyu language"(12).

As indicated earlier, when Ngugi wa Thiong'o started writing in Gikuyu, he went to see Gakaara and submitted some manuscripts to him. On reading them, Gakaara realized that Ngugi was "writing Gikuyu differently"(13). It was then that his interest in Gikuyu orthography arose.

In 1980 they had several meetings with other Gikuyu and with the linguist Karega Mutahi who "taught them how

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(10) Interview, Appendix 1.

(11) The series of textbooks written by Gakaara are entitled Thooma Giigikuyu Kiega, "Learn Good Gikuyu" (see 6.6).

(12) Interview, Appendix 1.

(13) Ibidem.

to write Gikuyu"(14). Although the police thought these meetings were political, Gakaara has always denied it, saying that for him at least the main interest was simply "to learn how to write Gikuyu". In fact, the immediate practical outcome(15) of these meetings was his writing the series of Gikuyu primers entitled Thooma Giigikuyu Kiega (Learn Good Gikuyu).

Since then the author has become extremely sensitive to the problem of using a correct orthography, or, as he calls it, "proper writing". At present he thinks that his mission is "to teach Gikuyu children how to write"(16).

At this stage it is important to understand what is the "new" orthographic system that Gakaara learned from Karega Mutahi.

The author wrote briefly about Gikuyu orthography in the "Message to Teachers" which opens the first of his textbooks, Thooma Giigikuyu Kiega: Ibuku ria Mbere (Learn Good Gikuyu: Book One)(17). He returned to and developed the subject in his introduction to Mwandikire wa Giigikuyu

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(14) Ibidem.

(15) Actually the other practical outcome was Gakaara's arrest for alleged association with the Mwakenya underground movement, see 5.8.

(16) Interview, Appendix 1.

(17) Gakaara wa Wanjau, Thooma Giikuyu Kiega: Ibuku ria Mbere (Learn Good Gikuyu: Book One), Karatina, March 1980 (January 1986, rev. ed. January 1988).

Karing'a (Let's Write in Pure Gikuyu), a series of three booklets to be used along with his primers.

In his "Message to Teachers", which opens the revised 1988 edition of Thooma Giigikuyu Kiega: Ibuku ria Mbere (Learn Good Gikuyu: Book One), Gakaara stresses the importance of the Gikuyu language:

> (...) It is important to know that our Gikuyu language is famous(18) and is learned by other peoples in African countries. There are even some who learned it because it is a Bantu language. That is why the Gikuyu themselves must correct it so that it is not spread with mistakes.
>
> All the books of the series Thooma Giigikuyu Kiega [Learn Good Gikuyu], and also the other books by Gakaara, have been corrected in good Gikuyu with the help and advice of Professor Karega Mutahi of Nairobi University, who is an expert in languages, especially in those of Black peoples.
>
> THE GIKUYU SAY: THE ONE WHO
> HAS BEEN ADVISED IS WISE(19)"

In his introduction to Mwandikire wa Giigikuyu Karing'a (Let's Write in Pure Gikuyu) Gakaara expresses his concern for Gikuyu orthography and he also explains the aim of his meetings with Ngugi, Karega Mutahi and

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(18) Gakaara has always stressed that the Gikuyu language is as important as English or Kiswahili. In the "Contents of This Book", which follows the "Message to Teachers", Gakaara adds: "[the Gikuyu] should not use foreign words if they have them in their language" (Ibidem, p. 6).

(19) Thooma Giigikuyu Kiega: Ibuku ria Mbere (Learn Good Gikuyu: Book One), pp. 3-4.

others. The first part of the introduction is worth translating(20):

"WHAT THE WRITER SAYS
Correcting the Gikuyu Orthography

In the year 1980 some Gikuyu, writers of books in the Gikuyu language, and myself among them, discovered that there were differences which should not exist in the way we wrote words in our language.

COMING TO A RESOLUTION

They had the aim of correcting the mistakes which were causing those differences and so they formed a group with other Gikuyu, teachers, leaders and translators of religious books, journalists and radio announcers(21); they formed a small group to correct the Gikuyu orthography, so that other people would follow them.

There was the generous Professor Karega wa Mutahi, expert in languages and in particular in those of black people, who taught at Nairobi University. Because of his love for Gikuyu children, he wanted them to write correctly and he volunteered for a few days to teach those writers so that they would all learn to use the same orthography.

He explained the rules that are followed in writing all the languages of the world. The most important rule is to write the words according to way people(22) pronounce them in their own language. This shows that the Gikuyu word must be written according to the way the pure Gikuyu person(23)

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(20) For the translation of the second part, where Gakaara explains how his Gikuyu primers are structured, see 6.6.

(21) A few radio programmes are broadcast in vernacular languages.

(22) Eene ruthiomi: literally "the owners of the language".

(23) Mugikuyu karing'a: "a pure Gikuyu person"; karing'a is a noun used as adjective and adverb, meaning "true", "really", "absolutely". It has also a political connotation because "I'm a Pure Gikuyu" was a verse of the

.../

pronounces it.

'MUNDU' AND 'MONDO'

At that time those writers discovered that the mistakes had been created when the Gikuyu language was first written down and confused by white people who did not understand each other's speech(24) and in particular the English and the Italians (the priests(25)).

The first misunderstanding was in the way they wrote the vowels. The English invented 'i' [with tilde] and 'u' [with tilde] and the priests called them 'e' and 'o'. For this reason the English wrote 'mundu' [person] and 'ruhi' [palm] and the priests wrote 'mondo' and 'rohe'(27).

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muthirigu, a political song against the missionaries and the government, sung in 1929-30 during the controversy over female circumcision (see 1.12). In colonial times Jomo Kenyatta in his public speeches often exorted his people to be "true Gikuyu".

(24) (...) ni Athungu maataiguanaga miaririlini: literally "(...) by white people who did not understand each other's speech". The meaning of this sentence is not clear. Gakaara probably means that the English and the Italians used two different orthographic systems because they were speaking two different languages and could not understand each other.

(25) Abia: "priests". On the origin of this word, see 1.2.

(27) It is not clear from the passage whether this is Gakaara's personal opinion or whether this is what he was told by Karega Mutahi's group. Actually, the fact that the Catholic and Protestant missionaries adopted two different orthographic systems did not mean that they did not know Gikuyu and thus "confused" Gikuyu sounds; on the contrary, very important contributions to the study of the Gikuyu language and oral literature were made by English and Italian missionaries (see bibliographies of studies of the Gikuyu language and of collections of Gikuyu oral literature). There had always been great competition between Catholic and Protestant missionaries in every field and their dispute over Gikuyu orthography

→ Appendix 11, .../

But, about 50 years ago, those differences were put to an end by a Committee of the Gikuyu Language, because it ruled that 'i' and 'u' [with tilde] had to be used. But that Committee was not able to correct the other mistakes like the ones repeatedly seen by the Gikuyu who are full specialists in languages(28).

NG'AMBI AND NYAMBI

In order to correct easily those words which go on being written wrongly, the writers, together with their teacher, coined two new words in Gikuyu, which they called NG'AMBI [vowel] AND NYAMBI [consonant](29). These are the foundations of these textbooks and of the demanding work of teachers who

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.../

was only one aspect of their rivalry . It is clear that the Catholics in particular, who were always complaining about the favouritism shown by the colonial administration towards the Protestant Churches, did not want the "Protestant" orthographic system to be officially approved of for reasons that went beyond their actual interest in the Gikuyu language (see also 6.3 and 1, esp. 1.9).

(28) For "mistakes" Gakaara probably intends the fact that vowels are not always doubled in writing, although they are pronounced long.

(29) A word must be said about the new words coined by Karega Mutahi's group, ng'ambi and nyambi for "vowel" and "consonant" because they were the first to find a Gikuyu word for "vowel". If we consult Barlow and Benson's English-Kikuyu Dictionary (Oxford, Clarendon Press 1975) no specific term is found for "vowel" and "consonant". "Vowel" is translated ndemwa iria ihotaga kugwetwo iri iiki, "a sound (literally "a letter of the alphabet") which can be articulated alone" (p. 315) and consonant "ndemwa o yothe tiga a e i o u i [with tilde] u [with tilde], "all the sounds with the exclusion of a e i o u i [with tilde] u [with tilde]" (p. 71). In the early fifties Fred K. Kago in his Wirute Guthoma: Ibuku ria Mbere (Learn to Read: Book One, London, Nelson 1953; Nairobi, Nelson East Africa 1987) used the word ndemwa for "vowel" (p. 2). Gakaara uses the same term to indicate "syllable" (Thooma Giigikuyu Kiega: Ibuku ria Mbere (Learn Good Gikuyu: Book One, p. 5), whereas Kago used ndemwa ("sound" or "letter of the alphabet") for "syllable". The latter did not introduce any specific term for "consonant".

have to show their usage to learners (...)"(30).

It is clear both from the leaflet and from the "Message to Teachers" that the new orthography Gakaara was taught was the writing of double vowels whenever they are pronounced long, which is exactly the system adopted by Ngugi in his works in Gikuyu.

The systematic writing of double vowels can be very useful to the learner of Gikuyu, who can pronounce words more easily, but at the same time it generates confusion because the doubling does not follow any stated rule. It is up to the Gikuyu speakers to write words in the way they pronounce them, but for non-mother tongue speakers it is very difficult to tell whether a vowel is long or short. Moreover, even for the native speaker, the process is not automatic and quite a number of Gikuyu I interviewed said that they found Ngugi's orthography "pedantic"(31).

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(30) Gakaara wa Wanjau, Introduction, Mwandikire wa Giigikuyu Karing'a: Ibuku ria Mbere (Let's Write in Pure Gikuyu: Book One), Karatina, Gakaara Press, January 1991, pp. 3-6. The same introduction opens Book Two and Book Three.

(31) Ngugi never explained his criteria for writing Gikuyu.

In spite of their intention to establish a common orthography, Gakaara, Karega Mutahi and Ngugi still use different orthographies. As an example, Gakaara writes ngucokeria instead of ngucookeria(32). Gakaara and Ngugi write thuutha whereas Karega Mutahi writes thutha(33). In brief, Ngugi always doubles vowels in writing when they are pronounced long, whereas Gakaara and Karega Mutahi do not always do so.

6.6 Gakaara's Primers(34)

We have seen in the previous section that, after his contacts with Karega Mutahi, Gakaara became so concerned about Gikuyu orthography that nowadays he thinks his mission is "to teach Gikuyu children how to write" and he wants to be considered "above all a specialist in Gikuyu"(35). In fact, since the early eighties he has

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(32) Gakaara wa Wanjau, Ibidem, p. 6.

(33) Cf. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Ibidem, p. 22; Gakaara wa Wanjau, Thooma Giigikuyu Kiega: Ibuku ria Mbere, p. 6; Karega wa Mutahi and Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira, Gikuyu Oral Literature, Nairobi, Heinemann Kenya 1988, p. 47, but in other parts of the book he writes thuutha (cf. e.g. p. 118). Ngugi writes naake (p. 23) and Karega nake (p. 118, but naake on the following page) and so on. Some differences in the orthography adopted by the three authors may be attributed to misprints.

(34) On Gakaara's primers, see also 5.10.

(35) Interview, Appendix 1.

devoted most of his time to writing Gikuyu primers and to revising them.

He published the five textbooks of the series Thooma Giigikuyu Kiega (Learn Good Gikuyu) - one for Standard One, two for Standard Two and two for Standard Three - between March 1980 and January 1986 and brought out the revised editions in 1988(36). In January 1991 he published three booklets of written exercises to be used along with the primers.

In 1989 he produced a handbook, addressed to adults, for teaching basic vocabulary in English and Kiswahili, Murutani wa Thiomi Ithatu Hamwe: Giigikuyu, Kiswahili, English (Teacher of Three Languages Together: Gikuyu, Kiswahili, English)(37).

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(36) See 11.

(37) The handbook is rather confusing, especially because words and phrases are not grouped by subject. At times the English translation is not accurate. For instance, mundu mugo is wrongly translated as "witch-doctor" (Gakaara wa Wanjau, op. cit., 1989, p. 11). Mundu mugo is a medicine man and also a diviner or seer, whereas murogi is the equivalent of the English "witch-doctor". L.S.B. Leakey in his The Southern Kikuyu Before 1903 (London, Academic Press 1977, Vol III, p. 1120) prefers to translate mundu mugo as "a professional worker in magic" because there is no English equivalent for this word. It is difficult to assess whether in Gakaara's handbook mistakes in the translation from Gikuyu can be attributed to the author because, on reading the introduction, the impression is gained that he is not responsible for the translation into English and Kiswahili. He writes: "I am grateful to Mr. Samuel M. Warottere, the current Headmaster of Muramati Secondary School, Laikipia District, who offered to peruse and correct the spelling and use of words in the three

.../

In order to assess Gakaara's primers and compare them with the commonest primers by other authors(38), it will be useful to follow the check-list of criteria for evaluating textbooks proposed at the Commonwealth African Book Development Seminar held in Ibadan in 1982:

> "1. Qualité de la production, de la présentation et de l'iconographie (...).
> 2. (...) évaluation séparée du contenu de chaque sujet principal traité(39).
> 3. Sujets ou domaines de connaissance traités. Un livre peut apporter une contribution déterminée à l'instruction personnelle, sociale, utilitaire ou culturelle des élèves ou développer leurs

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languages" (p. 4, English original). I do not know Kiswahili, thus I cannot assess the accuracy of the translation of Gikuyu words into Kiswahili.

(38) I examined the following primers: Fred K. Kago's, Wirute Guthoma: Ibuku ria Mbere (Learn to Read: Book One), Nairobi, East African Literature Bureau 1953 (Nelson East Africa 1974, repr. 1977, 1980, 1983, 1984, 1986, 1987, 1988), Wirute Guthoma: Ibuku ria Keri (Learn to Read: Book Two), Nairobi, East African Literature Bureau 1954 (Nelson East Africa 1975, repr. 1977, 1978, 1980, 1983, 1984, 1986, 1987, 1988), Wirute Guthoma: Ibuku ria Gatatu (Learn to Read: Book Three), Nairobi, East African Literature Bureau 1958 (Nelson East Africa 1975 (repr. 1978, 1980, 1986, 1987, 1988), Patrick M. Kamau's Mithomere ya Gikuyu: Ibuku ria Mbere (How to Read Gikuyu: Book One), Mithomere ya Gikuyu: Ibuku ria Keri (How to Read Gikuyu: Book Two), Mithomere ya Gikuyu: Ibuku ria Gatatu (How to Read Gikuyu: Book Three), Nairobi Kesho Publications 1989 and E.N. Ngugi's Ambiriria Guthoma Gikuyu: Ibuku ria Mbere (Start Reading Gikuyu: Book One), Ambiriria Guthoma Gikuyu: Ibuku ria Keri (Start Reading Gikuyu: Book Two), Ambiriria Guthoma Gikuyu: Ibuku ria Gatatu (Start Reading Gikuyu: Book Three), Nairobi, Ellbell Agency 1989.

(39) I shall not take into consideration this point to any great extent because this is not a detailed analysis of Gikuyu textbooks. Such an analysis would be very useful, but it would constitute a study in itself.

connaissances, leurs compétences et leurs aptitudes (...).

4. La langue. S'assurer scrupuleusement que les mots (...), les phrases et les structures syntaxiques utilisés dans l'ouvrage correspondent au niveau d'expression des lecteurs.

5. Les méthodes. La manière dont les compétences sont enseignées (...) est déterminée, en règle générale, par les ministères de l'éducation (...) Tout aussi important est la définition des méthodes qui permettent de relier l'enseignement à l'environnement social et naturel des élèves"(40).

On examining the available Gikuyu textbooks we get the impression that all the authors of primers, with the exception of Fred K. Kago, had limited teaching experience (if any) and no linguistic training in general. In the case of Gakaara we cannot expect a new pedagogic approach in his primers because he has never schoolmastered, apart from some teaching of adults in detention camps(41).

In Kenya a prime motivation for the writing of textbooks (and children's literature in general) is that a market is guaranteed if the Ministry of Education includes them on official syllabuses.

On the whole, the available Gikuyu textbooks are very similar in content and structure. The recently published primers present no innovations or improvement on those

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(40) "A Check-list of Criteria for Evaluating Textbooks", Report of the Commonwealth African Book Development Seminar, Ibadan, 2-15 February 1975, p. 47 as quoted by S.I.A. Kotei in Le livre aujourd'hui en Afrique, Paris, Les Presses de l'Unesco 1982, p. 123.

(41) On Gakaara and the camp-schools, see 3.5, 3.6 and 3.9.

brought out by Fred K. Kago in the fifties, which, in my view, remain unrivalled still(42).

These textbooks contain roughly the same number of pages (an average of forty) and approximately the same number of drawings, all in black and white, and not particularly attractive(43).

The primers introduce the same subjects and follow the same order of presentation, which can be summarized as follows: 1. introduction of vowel and consonant sounds (and relevant phonetic drills and written exercises) 2. formation of words (and relevant oral and written exercises) 3. formation of short sentences in the affirmative, negative, interrogative forms (and relevant

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(42) Fred K. Kago was the first Gikuyu to write Gikuyu primers between 1953 and 1958 (the textbooks which had appeared before had not been entirely written by a Gikuyu, but jointly by a British and a Gikuyu). In my opinion, they remain the most valuable primers ever written. Kago had been trained as a teacher and had a long teaching experience, whereas most authors, and Gakaara among them, had not.

(43) Unfortunately this is also a common feature of all books for children published in Kenya. Most children's books contain poor illustrations in black and white. If, on the one hand, small publishing houses cannot be blamed for that, on the other, it is a pity that big companies like Evans and Longman Kenya, do not pay more attention to illustrations. The publishers maintain that they do so because they have to keep down production costs. The series for children published by Heinemann Kenya is illustrated by good artists, although only a few booklets include drawings in colour. The East African Publishing House is an exception because its Lioncub Series for young children and Basic English Readers contain beautiful illustrations in colour.

exercises) 4. reading material of different lengths and graded difficulty (and relevant comprehension exercises).

Gakaara's textbooks, thirty-six pages each, do not deviate from the above scheme, as it is shown clearly in his outline of their content:

> "[In the textbooks] the words ng'ambi [vowel] and nyambi [consonant] are introduced (...) It is explained which are syllables(44) with short vowels and which are syllables with long vowels (...) it is also explained how these syllables are used to form words and sentences in Gikuyu (...). [The textbooks] teach synonyms, opposites, singular and plural, numbers (...). The second section of each book contains exercises on what is taught in the book, following the current syllabus. The pupil is asked to fill in the blanks, to correct wrong words and sentences, to answer riddles, to fill in the missing words in a proverb, to add words in incomplete sentences and so on"(45).

Gakaara does not introduce any innovations in the content and structure of his textbooks, which closely follow "the current syllabus" of the Ministry of Education, just like the other available primers. But on writing his textbooks he had in mind a different kind of

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(44) Ndemwa cia ng'ambi nguhi na cia ng'ambi ndaihu ni iriku: literally "which are the letters (made up) of short vowels and which are the letters [made up] of long vowels". In this context Gakaara uses the word ndemwa ("letter of the alphabet" or "sound") for "syllable".

(45) Ibidem.

innovation: the writing of double vowels whenever they are pronounced long.

Gakaara himself considers the teaching of this "new" orthography as the most important feature of his primers. Actually, we can infer from his own words that the main reason for his writing them was "to correct Gikuyu orthography". He explains in his introduction to the series Mwandikire wa Giigikuyu Karing'a (Let's Write in Pure Gikuyu):

> "In 1984 I wrote some primers, to teach how to correct Gikuyu orthography. They are entitled 'THOOMA GIIGIKUYU KIEGA' [Learn Good Gikuyu]. The aim of these textbooks is to protect Gikuyu children from inheriting and making the mistakes that their fathers and fathers' fathers went on making over 100 years ago (...). There is hope this correct Gikuyu orthography will be used all over Gikuyuland in time, say in 10 years"(46).

This is not the appropriate place to discuss whether Gakaara actually succeeded in popularizing the "new" orthography; moreover, in so much as the revised editions of his textbooks were published in 1988, it is probably

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(46) Gakaara wa Wanjau, op. cit., January 1991, pp. 4-5.

too early to observe any repercussions(47). There is clearly a need for further standardisation(48).

In the outline of the content of Gikuyu textbooks, we have remarked that the reading material constitutes an essential part of all available primers. It will be useful to analyse it, particularly in the light of the third criterion for evaluating textbooks singled out by the Commonwealth African Book Development Seminar, that is to say its "contribution to the personal, social, practical or cultural education of the pupils".

The reading material included in the textbooks can be divided into two groups: (a) Gikuyu oral literature and (b) pieces on topics of general interest, such as nature, hygiene, history, geography and administration.

Usually, the primers for Standard One and Standard Two present Gikuyu traditional customs, Gikuyu riddles, proverbs, songs, short folktales and short pieces on nature, hygiene and geography, whereas those for Standard Three include fairly long Gikuyu folktales as well as long articles, particularly on history and administration(49).

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(47) Both Patrick M. Kamau and E.N. Ngugi, the authors of the most recent Gikuyu primers, published in 1989, ignore the "new" orthography proposed by Gakaara.

(48) There is also confusion in the writing of Gikuyu names. On this problem, refer to the discussion at the beginning of Appendix 3.

(49) Fred K. Kago's primers slightly differ from this

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The reading material included in Gakaara's primers calls for special attention both in terms of form and content. It shows his great skill as a writer and it reflects his usual concerns with Gikuyu traditions and the recent history of Kenya, all issues that he developed in his books for adults, but that he also finds particularly relevant to the formation and education of Gikuyu children.

Gakaara does not include in his textbooks pieces on nature, hygiene and geography, topics that he has never treated in his works, but he concentrates on the recent history of Kenya, writing on the Gikuyu heroes of the past(50), on the leaders of the struggle for independence and on the KANU Party,

Although all textbooks introduce Gikuyu traditions and customs, Gakaara not only presents far more, he also shows a different, "practical", approach.

In his primer "A" for Standard Three, for instance, he does not limit himself to a presentation of Gikuyu

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scheme. In fact, his textbook for Standard Two includes a few short extracts from the New Testament and that for Standard Three also contains two European folktales and a fairly long story from the Old Testament.

(50) In his primer for Standard Two Fred K. Kago includes a piece on Gikuyu prophets, but he does not write about Gikuyu leaders of the past. He probably could not tackle this topic because, as he was writing in colonial times, he could not stress the importance of pre-colonial history.

greetings, like the other authors do, but he insists on their daily use, explaining in detail what is the appropriate greeting for every occasion(51).

On the whole, the reading material included in Gakaara's textbooks reflects the author's firm conviction that the history of the Gikuyu and their customs constitute a living tradition, which can help the younger generation, not only to understand the past, but, more important still, to live in the present.

6.7 Foreign Influences in Gikuyu

New words have been incorporated into Gikuyu either directly through English or via Kiswahili.

Ex. mutoka (Gikuyu) motokaa (Kiswahili) "motorcar"
thigara (Gikuyu) sigara (Kiswahili) "cigarette"

But, apart the new vocabulary, numerous foreign words are rapidly replacing existing Gikuyu words. The preference for English and Kiswahili words affects mostly those words in common usage, such as greetings and words used to name relatives. Thus, for example, gucenja, from

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(51) Gakaara expresses his preoccupation that Gikuyu greetings may eventually disappear in Ugwati wa Muthungu Muiru (The Danger of the Black European). For an analysis of this booklet, see 6.8. The English translation appears in Appendix 2.8.

the English "to change", is replacing the Gikuyu kugarura(52), and Kiswahili mama and English "mummy" the Gikuyu maitu(53).

Gakaara condemns this practice maintaining that, in spite of what some Gikuyu think, they are not "adding new words", but simply forgetting their mother tongue(54).

The reason for these "intrusions" is that Kiswahili and English are the official languages of Kenya and vernacular languages are not encouraged by the government. There are no periodicals(55) and television programmes in vernacular languages and very few on the radio. In rural areas children are taught in their mother tongue only for the first three years and it is not surprising that when they grow up they cannot read and write in it. The situation is even worse among people who were born in town or who went to live there and have very few opportunities to talk in their vernacular. Although there is still a strong tendency to marry people from the same ethnic group, nowadays, especially in urban centres, "mixed" marriages are not uncommon. Their offspring are more

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(52) Interview, Appendix 1.

(53) On Gakaara and English interferences in Gikuyu, see 6.8.

(54) Interview, Appendix 1.

(55) In Kenya several religious journals are published in vernacular languages, see 1.10.

likely to speak English and Kiswahili than their parents' languages. Moreover, in order to go on to higher education or to get a good job, people must be fluent in English and Kiswahili. All these factors lead to the wide-spread belief that vernacular languages are second-class languages.

6.8 Gakaara and English Interferences in Gikuyu

Although nowadays Gakaara's main concern is Gikuyu orthography, we should not forget that he has always struggled for the defence and development of the Gikuyu language.

In 1971 he dedicated a whole booklet, Ugwati wa Muthungu Muiru (The Danger of the Black European)(56) to English interferences in Gikuyu. He published a revised edition in 1978 and, since then, he has reprinted it several times, thus showing that he still considers it relevant to the present situation.

The main points raised by Gakaara in his booklet are the psychological problems created for colonized people by

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(56) Gakaara wa Wanjau, Ugwati wa Muthungu Muiru (The Danger of the Black European), Karatina, Gakaara Press 1971, rev. ed. 1978. Parts of the booklet appear in Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine Nos. 32, 33 and 41 (see 11.1). All the quotations which will follow are from my translation of the 1978 edition, see Appendix 2.8).

the imposition of a foreign language(57), the danger of an eventual disappearance of Gikuyu vis-à-vis the dominant English language and the widespread use of English words in conversations in Gikuyu, that is to say Gikuyu/English codeswitching(58).

Although the above issues are not new to the scholar of African literature and linguistics, it is particularly remarkable that Gakaara tackles them in ignorance of the academic debate(59).

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(57) This issue has been debated by numerous African writers and scholars, see e.g. Ngugi wa Thiong'o's, Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature (London, James Currey 1986) and Ali A. Mazrui's, The Political Sociology of the English Language: An African Perspective, The Hague, Mouton 1975.

(58) Unfortunately Gikuyu/English codeswitching has not been studied so far by scholars. Carol Myers Scotton has dedicated several valuable essays to Kiswahili/English codeswitching in Kenya, see esp. "Accounting for Structure in Swahili/English Codeswitching", Working Papers in Kiswahili No. 9, State University of Ghent, Seminar for Swahili and Language Problems of Developing Nations, September 1990. David J. Parkin has written an extremely interesting essay on "Language Switching in Narobi" in W.H. Whiteley ed., Language in Kenya, Nairobi, Oxford University Press 1974, pp. 189-216.

(59) I have already remarked in 6.6 that Gakaara had very limited contacts with academics. Only for a brief period was he associated with Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Karega Mutahi, when they were trying to establish a common Gikuyu orthography.

The points raised by Gakaara in Ugwati wa Muthungu Muiru (The Danger of the Black European) are very similar to those singled out by academics. Correspondences between Gakaara's booklet and Ngugi's Decolonising the Mind are to be expected, but less revealing since the two authors are both Kenyans and Gikuyu. The similarities between Gakaara's booklet and the essays written by academics are

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The aim of Ugwati wa Muthungu Muiru (The Danger of the Black European) is, in Gakaara's words, "to advise those Gikuyu who do not know that they are black Europeans" because "they have contracted the disease of speaking English when it is unnecessary", that is to say when they talk to other Gikuyu.

According to Gakaara, the preference for English shown by some Gikuyu is the effect of a psychological problem or, in his own words, a "self-created disease"(60) caused by colonialism. In order to render his point intellegible to his readers Gakaara adopts the image of "the colonialist's rooster" which "the colonialist left behind on leaving Kenya" at independence so that it would "crow in the brains of the Gikuyu" and force them to speak English, even when they talk to other Gikuyu(61).

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more striking if we take into consideration works by scholars from other countries, see e.g. Kahombo Mateeene's "Reconsideration of the Official Status of Colonial Languages in Africa", in K. Mateene ed. Linguistic Liberation and Unity of Africa, Kampala, OAU Inter-African Bureau of Languages, Publication No. 6, 1985, pp. 18-28.

(60) Gakaara seems particularly fascinated by psychological problems. He dedicated a whole booklet to inferiority complexes, see 5.4.

(61) On p. 3 of Ugwati wa Muthungu Muiru (The Danger of the Black European) Gakaara writes that Jomo Kenyatta used the image of "the colonialist's rooster" in his post-independence speeches. The second president of Kenya, Daniel arap Moi, at times imitates Kenyatta and uses the image of the rooster in his speeches.

Kenyatta's image of the rooster is new because the expression "to have a rooster in the head" does not exist

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Gakaara writes that "Gikuyu society was enslaved by the colonialist" and "the Gikuyu came to believe that, just as the colonialist was a great man, so was his language". Since English is "the language of the colonialist, the language of slavery", on speaking it, the Gikuyu show that they are still "in the chains of slavery" and also make "the colonialist feel proud" of his unbroken power over them.

Gakaara goes on to explain that language should be considered the most treasured possession of those who speak it. People who are deprived of their own language, "become alienated from their customs and traditions and also from their traditional celebrations. In the end, they are even denied their national liberty and they lose political control to foreigners - all this as a result of using a foreign language"(62).

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in Gikuyu, just as it does not in Kiswahili. In Gikuyu we only find the expression nguku nda , "to have a rooster in the stomach" as a result of witchcraft. The rooster is put into the stomach of a person by the witch-doctor (murogi) so that he or she falls ill. It is the work of the medicine-man (mundu mugo) to remove it. Arguably, the rooster eats all the food in the stomach of the bewitched person who weakens and eventually dies. I am not sure of my explanation because none of my informants could tell me the origin of this expression.

(62) It is interesting to note that Gakaara does not consider linguistic domination as a secondary effect of political domination, but sees the imposition of a foreign language as the first step towards political subordination.

According to Gakaara colonialism had also disruptive effects on Gikuyu traditions and beliefs: "the colonialist not only stultified the Gikuyu language" but Gikuyu religion as well and "the Gikuyu were deceived into believing that the colonialist's religion was better than theirs".

In his booklet Gakaara does not question the Christian religion, towards which he has always had an ambivalent attitude, but the fact that it was imposed on the Gikuyu who had their own, equally important, traditional beliefs. "The Gikuyu", he writes, "were confused and abandoned their traditional beliefs for no reason. They abandoned their sacrifices under the fig tree, although nobody has ever been able to explain why praying under the fig tree is wrong"(63), just as "nobody can give a good reason why God would be more likely to answer prayers concluding with the colonialist's word amen, than prayers which end with kurotuika guo [let it be so] or thaai, thathaiya Ngai, thaai [mercy, entreat God, mercy]". Similarly, Gakaara argues, to have a Christian name does not guarantee any "special" closeness to God, who will answer men's prayers, no matter whether they have a Christian or a Gikuyu name.

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(63) The fig tree, mugumo, is the sacred tree of the Gikuyu. They used to pray under the fig tree facing Mount Kenya because God was believed to live above the mountain (the highest in Gikuyuland and in Kenya).

Gakaara's argument is that just as there is no reason to adopt a foreign language, there is no justification for embracing a foreign religion. If people do so, he writes, it means that they have "the colonialist's rooster in their brains which makes them prefer the colonialist's language" and religion to theirs.

It was in colonial schools, Gakaara explains, that "the colonialist's rooster was forced into the minds of the Gikuyu".

The command of English was an important criterion for acceding to the post-primary level of learning and to any position of some responsibility, hence English became the language of the educated and "important" people(64). By learning English, Gakaara maintains, "the Gikuyu thought that they would become more important, just like the European". But it was only an illusion because their knowledge of English could not change the colour of their skin: "they forgot that they could never become white men,

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(64) Gakaara was not the first Gikuyu to express his concern for an eventual disappearance of the Gikuyu language in the face of the dominant English language. As early as 1963 Fred K. Kago wrote: "(...) Why is it that English might overwhelm the Kikuyu language? Because: 1. Many Africans think that education is the same thing as ability in English. 2. They think that a man who is able to speak English well is a well-educated person. 3. English is so powerful in competition due to the fact that it is a well-developed literary language" (The Teaching of Vernacular: Handbook for Kikuyu Teachers, London, Nelson 1963, p. 2).

but only black Europeans", that is to say alienated people with no cultural identity.

In the first decade of independence, Gakaara writes, the situation was not different, as Gikuyu children continued to be taught in English at primary school. The exclusive use of English in basic education caused alienation and estrangement and Gikuyu children became "small black Europeans" who were bound to forget their mother tongue after a few years.

The author does not blame the government of independent Kenya for that, but "the colonialist who wanted the Gikuyu to live in his bag, while he was claiming" that they "had got independence".

It was only in 1970, Gakaara explains, that "the black people of the Education Department rejected the colonialist's plan because they could see that the colonialist was going to destroy the Gikuyu language completely". They ruled that "Gikuyu children should start being taught to read and to write in their mother tongue" and the Gikuyu "should therefore thank the leaders of the Education Department of that time because, although the colonialist went on interfering" with the Gikuyu language, "they tried to stop the colonialist's rooster from being forced into the minds" of Gikuyu children, as was happening before.

In independent Kenya, Gakaara laments, some Gikuyu still suffer from a "self-created disease", or

psychological problem, which leads them to speak English even to other Gikuyu. Again, he does not blame the government of independent Kenya, or rather its policy towards vernacular languages, but the colonialist. He writes: "those people who are more used to speaking English than Gikuyu have become slaves of the colonialist's rooster and that's why they speak English even when they are not supposed to do so".

Gakaara does not deny the importance of English, "one of the most important languages in the world" that "puts Kenyans into contact with the outside world"(65). But he condemns the practice of speaking English "when it is unnecessary" because, "if the Gikuyu go on talking in English to each other, in 100 years' time all Gikuyu will be married to Englishmen".

By saying "talking in English", Gakaara means both "speaking English" and "using English words".

Gakaara dedicates a section of his booklet to the widespread use of English words in conversation in

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(65) Gakaara stresses the importance of knowing English and Kiswahili in his introduction to Murutani wa Thiomi Ithatu Hamwe: Giigikuyu, Kiswahili, English (Teacher of Three Languages Together: Gikuyu, Kiswahili, English). He writes:"It is advisable for a learner to put more effort in learning Kiswahili and English because both languages are widely used in schools, offices and large organization throughout Kenya" (p. 4, English original, our emphasis).

Gikuyu(66). People who "mix languages", he maintains, suffer from a "self-created disease", or psychological problem, "the disease of mixing languages". He explains that "people who have got that disease, after a while, cannot help using some English words, even when they try to speak Gikuyu". He gives numerous examples of conversations which show Gikuyu/English codeswitching, such as:

Iyo ti PROBLEM hari MY WIFE

"This is not a problem for my wife"

MUMMY, na utureehere BANANAS and BREAD

"Mummy, bring us bananas and bread"

Gakaara does not see rapid urbanization as one of the possible causes of intermixing, although he points out that "in Gikuyu districts traditional greetings", for instance, " still hold very firm". Neither does he consider as another possible cause the development of mass media exclusively in English (and Kiswahili), although he blames those Gikuyu "who [only] listen to English music on the radio".

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(66) Fred K. Kago was probably one of the first authors to point out the problem of intermixing. He wrote in the early sixties: "Many teachers in our schools are no longer able to express themselves in the real vernacular language, and tend to use a mixture of English and Kikuyu. In the streets too, very often, you hear people using this mixture". Kago gives also some examples of Gikuyu/English codeswitching, such as Ndokire MONDAY, "I came on Monday" and Riu ni hingo ya BREAK, "Now it is time for the break (...)" (Kago, Fred K., op. cit., p. v).

Gakaara imputes the cause of the "disease of mixing languages" to the colonialist: "The Gikuyu use English words while speaking Gikuyu because they have been enslaved by the colonialist's rooster".

It is the colonialist's rooster, Gakaara maintains, which "forces the Gikuyu to think that, if they use English words, their Gikuyu will be better understood". But, actually, they end up "confusing" their interlocutors, "especially when there are people who do not understand English" and so they "cannot get the whole message".

According to Gakaara very few people can speak a foreign language fluently and, unless they were brought up abroad, it is impossible for them "to speak it as well as their mother tongue and without making any mistakes" and, in spite of their efforts, the Gikuyu "will never speak like the colonialist".

The implication of Gakaara's argument is that, since it is impossible for the Gikuyu to express themselves fully in English, it would be much better for them to speak in Gikuyu, without wasting time in a hopeless pursuit. And yet, Gakaara laments, there are Gikuyu who are not interested in their own language: "It is a shameful thing to hear people, who are Gikuyu from head to toe, say openly that they do not know Gikuyu and say it in Gikuyu".

"If you ask them why they do not know Gikuyu", Gakaara explains, they will give "fake reasons", such as "Gikuyu is harder than English", or "Gikuyu has not got a large enough vocabulary" or that "they have been brought up in Nairobi or Mombasa and so they were not taught Gikuyu". But the truth, in Gakaara's view, is that "they have not learned to speak Gikuyu" and so they "despise" their language and "say it is not good" only because they "cannot speak it well".

He does not condemn the attitude of those Gikuyu who are not proud of their origins and language because he considers them unconscious victims of the colonialist. "If they throw away their language and beliefs", Gakaara writes, "they do not realize they are doing so, because they have the colonialist's rooster in their minds". It is "the colonialist's rooster", he maintains, which "makes them prefer its language to theirs".

Gakaara explains that the Gikuyu "speak English when it is unnecessary" when they want "to show off". For this reason he defines English (which he has previously described as "the language of the colonialist", "the language of slavery") "the language of boasting " as opposed to Gikuyu, which is "the language of tradition".

According to Gakaara, the Gikuyu speak English to other Gikuyu at their places of work and especially in offices, in order to give themselves airs of "high-class people" and to show that they are "more important and

educated" than they really are. But also those who know very little English, Gakaara writes, "start using colonial words here and there" to boast and even abuse other people "when they get drunk".

Gakaara would appear to contradict himself when he presents the problem of those Gikuyu who speak English to their spouses and children at home, that is to say where there is no reason to put on airs. He complains that the Gikuyu "are lost in the bush if a husband and his wife at home" call each other in English "darling" or "my dear". Moreover, he warns, the practice of "speaking English at home" (i.e. using English words) has extremely negative effects on children, who grow up ignoring, for instance, "what to call their grandmothers and grandfathers", and their relatives in general, in Gikuyu(67).

In Gakaara's view the above are all "examples which show how the colonialist's rooster" makes the Gikuyu "remain in the chains of the colonialist's language". That chain keeps them "in slavery and in danger of becoming black Europeans" in their very homes and with their own children.

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(67) In Gikuyu the way to name one's relatives is quite complex. There is no single equivalent, for instance, for the English word "grandfather". It can be translated guka or wagui, "my grandfather", gukaguo, "your grandfather", or gukawe, "his/her/their grandfather".

In the last section of the booklet, entitled "How Can We Prevent It?", Gakaara proposes the following fields of action for "the protection of the Gikuyu language": firstly, the Gikuyu who use English and English words "must convince themselves that they must fight their conditioning" and speak Gikuyu to other Gikuyu; secondly, "the teaching of Gikuyu must be emphasized by Gikuyu teachers(68). Gikuyu is taught up to Standard III, but it should be taught up to Standard VIII"(69); thirdly, "the Gikuyu must understand that it is their work at home to prevent their children from using the colonialist's words".

Gakaara concludes his booklet exhorting his readers to follow his advice: "If we do the above, then we can prevent our being colonized and we shall not be slaves of another language and we shall show our bravery in protecting our Gikuyu language from disappearance in time".

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(68) Fred K. Kago had also stressed the responsibility of Gikuyu primary school teachers in "keeping alive" Gikuyu when he wrote: "It would be possible for me to appeal to teachers' emotions by stressing the importance of keeping alive the 'richness of the Kikuyu language' in the face of the invasion by Swahili and English" (op. cit., p. vi).

(69) Fred K. Kago proposed Gikuyu as the medium of instruction and English as a second language for the first four years of school, then, for the next four years, English as the medium of instruction and Gikuyu taught as a subject (Ibidem, p. vii).

On the whole Ugwati wa Muthungu Muiru (The Danger of the Black European) reveals Gakaara's abilities as a pamphleteer. In straightforward language, tailored for his non-specialized audience, he explains how linguistic domination is part and parcel of economic and political domination. His representation of the psychological problems created by colonialism as something tangible and cumbersome, "the colonialist's rooster" which occupies the minds and subjugates the thoughts of the colonized people, is a powerful image.

Gakaara clearly describes the situation in colonial times. He emphasizes how, in order to "enslave" the Gikuyu, the British "stultified" their language and traditional heritage in general and he also underlines the role played by the school in creating "black Europeans". In contrast, his description of today's reality remains somewhat confused and, at times, we get the impression that, though he is talking about the present situation, in reality, he is describing problems which existed in colonial times and in the early sixties.

In this pamphlet Gakaara often makes sudden shifts from colonial times to the present situation, without making it clear that he is doing so. He applies the same pattern of reasoning for the two periods, to conclude that in both the Gikuyu have been using English and English words because they had and still have "the colonialist's rooster in their minds". For example:

The British imposed their language(70) because they wanted the Gikuyu "to become their slaves" (COLONIAL PERIOD)

Those who use English "become alienated from their customs and traditions and also from their traditional celebrations. In the end, they are even denied their national liberty and they lose political control to foreigners" (COLONIAL PERIOD)

To adopt a foreign language is particularly dangerous because "anthropologists have discovered that when a people adopt a foreign language, they end up being slaves of the foreign people who are the owners of the language they use. For this reason the Gikuyu will become slaves to the British [if they continue speaking English]" (COLONIAL PERIOD BUT APPLIED TO PRESENT AND FUTURE SITUATIONS).

The Gikuyu speak English "when it is unnecessary" (i.e.to other Gikuyu) because they want "to show off" (COLONIAL PERIOD AND PRESENT SITUATION).

They use English (i.e. speak English and use English words): at their places of work, at home and in bars when they are drunk (PRESENT SITUATION).

They do not speak Gikuyu because, they claim, "Gikuyu is harder than English", "they were born in town", "Gikuyu has not got a large enough vocabulary"

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(70) Many Europeans, on the contrary, insisted on the African use of vernacular and Kiswahili.

In his book published in 1934, Parmenas Mockerie lamented the fact that Africans in Kenya were denied the opportunity of learning English and hence of participating "in the social and political structure of the life in their homeland" (Parmenas Mockerie, op. cit., p.58).

Richard Frost (the first representative of the British Council in Kenya), in his study of race relations in Kenya in the late colonial period, writes that "many Europeans in Kenya considered it right that Africans should not be allowed to speak English. If they conversed with Europeans in English, they might be tempted to suppose they could become the equals of the Europeans. Africans who had a little education and felt that ability to speak a little English was a mark of progress were saddened by this European rejection, and the better educated were wounded by the humiliation which it brought on them" (Frost, op. cit., p. 140).

(PRESENT SITUATION)

> Actually they speak English and use English words because "the colonialist's rooster makes them prefer its language to theirs" (COLONIAL PERIOD AND PRESENT SITUATION)

Gakaara's booklet gives the impression of being "outdated" when he tries to explain why some Gikuyu prefer English to their mother tongue. His insistence on the interference of "the colonialist's language" in Gikuyu would have been right if he had been talking about the past. But, is it possible still to talk about the Gikuyu, especially the younger generations, speaking English as a result of colonialism?

In my view, Gakaara does not take into consideration today's reality in all its complexity and one possible reason for his not doing so may be a precise choice on his part to avoid any criticism of independent Kenya.

We have seen earlier on in this study how unsparingly he devoted himself to the cause of independence in the forties and fifties and how firmly he later on supported the government of independent Kenya(71). In his booklet he praises the progress made by his country after independence ("since we got independence we have made a lot of progress and the whole world has seen it"). Hence, in his view, it would be unacceptable to envisage the

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(71) On this topic, see 5.2.

existence of a "neo-colonial rooster", or even to imply that problems and contradictions still exist in independent Kenya, by criticizing, for instance, the government policy towards vernacular languages.

The only "implicit" criticism in Gakaara's booklet is to be found in his statement that "Gikuyu should be taught up to Standard VIII [instead of Standard III]". It is however counterbalanced by his previous praise of "the Gikuyu experts in the Educational Department" who, in 1970, "defeated the colonialist's plan to destroy" Gikuyu, by ruling that children should be taught in their mother tongue.

A final remark should be made about Kiswahili interferences in Gikuyu, an issue that Gakaara completely overlooks in his booklet.

He states that Kiswahili is "the language of Eastern and Central Africa" and "the national language" of Kenya and it "should be used in the offices where there are people from different ethnic groups", but he does not take into consideration either the use of Kiswahili "when it is unnecessary" or the growing use of Kiswahili words in Gikuyu.

In my view, there may be two possible reasons for his ignoring the above issue. Firstly, because in his booklet Gakaara mainly refers to colonial times when the problem of Kiswahili influences in Gikuyu was not

particularly relevant(72). Secondly, since Kiswahili is not a colonial language, the admission of the existence of Kiswahili "intrusions" in Gikuyu, would have implied a criticism of the government's policy of encouraging the official language to the detriment of vernacular languages(73).

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(72) In the early sixties Kago expressed his concern about Kiswahili influences in Gikuyu: "During the early years of a child's school life efforts must be made to prevent the weal for Swahili and English from destroying his interest in the Kikuyu language " (op. cit., p. 3).

(73) Arguably, the main problem today is that of Kiswahili interferences in Gikuyu. The affinities between the two languages lead the Gikuyu to use a Swahili word instead of a Gikuyu one, without their even realizing it. I noticed that even my teachers of Gikuyu at language schools in Nairobi were doing so. Moreover, the Gikuyu tend to apply Swahili orthographic rules to Gikuyu and they often write b instead of mb for the explosive b (as in English "baby"), whereas b in Gikuyu is a voiced weak bi-labial fricative (similar to the English f in "father").

I think that Gakaara made a deliberate choice not to talk about Swahili interferences in Gikuyu, although he is aware of the problem. In the course of our interview he said that Gikuyu primary school teachers consider his textbooks "useful" because they help them to "find the right word in Gikuyu", instead of using the Swahili (not English!) word which first comes to their minds: "They say: 'Now [after reading the textbooks] I have something to do because, when I teach a word, I think of a Swahili word. Instead of saying this is maitu [mother], I say mama, which is wrong'". The teachers' experience, as reported by Gakaara, seems to confirm my impression that today Kiswahili interferences in Gikuyu are increasing. Most Kenyans use colloquial Kiswahili instead of colloquial English in their daily life. A study of foreign interferences in Gikuyu and an analysis of the linguistic situation in Kenya in general would be extremely useful.

7. LITERARY INFLUENCES ON GAKAARA

7.1 Introduction

It is not easy to assess what kind of literature influenced Gakaara. However, we can start with a few considerations in order to clarify the fact that the influences one might expect to be the most important, that is to say English literature and Gikuyu oral literature, actually played a very limited role, especially in his formative years.

Firstly, he did not study any literature at school and, by his own admission, he has never had time to read literary works, either in English, or in Gikuyu (or in Kiswahili) because he has always been completely absorbed in his writing and in his publishing house, which is his responsibility entirely(1).

Secondly, although one would expect a strong influence of Gikuyu oral literature because Gakaara started writing in Gikuyu when there was very little written material in his language, this is not so. Gakaara did not grow up in a traditional village, but in what can be considered a world apart: Tumutumu Church of Scotland Mission station.

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(1) See Interview, Appendix 1.

7.2 The Bible

In the twenties and thirties the distance which separated the Christian community and the non-Christian was more than theological; the former lived around the mission station, while the latter in the traditional village. The mission was a small world in itself, a kind of island, where "heathen" customs, be they traditional religious practices, or dances, or story telling, were all banned.

Gakaara in particular, as the son of a Church of Scotland minister, was not allowed by his father to have any kind of contact with the "outside" world(2). Thus, in his formative years, he had no opportunity to listen to traditional story tellers. At night, instead, he used to listen to his father reading the Bible to the family.

At the mission school reading material consisted entirely of religious books, a catechism, which Gakaara would reprint in the seventies(3), and the Bible(4).

Gakaara said that, when he was young, he "enjoyed reading the Bible and the New Testament in particular", and Biblical stories were the only stories he read and listened to in his childhood and adolescence. Hence, if,

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(2) Gakaara was particularly attracted by traditional dances. In the interview he said that he ran away from home several times to attend dances, but his father inevitably went to collect him and gave him a beating (Interview, Appendix 1).

(3) See 11.19.

(4) On the Bible and its translations into Gikuyu, see 1.9.

on the one hand, Gikuyu oral literature did not play an important role in Gakaara's formative years, on the other hand, we can single out one strong influence: the Bible.

7.3 The Gikuyu Vernacular Press and Gikuyu Customs

When Gakaara grew up he became intolerant of all kinds of authority. In 1939 his father sent him to the exclusive Alliance High School, but he was expelled after a few months for unruly behaviour(5).

In December 1940 Gakaara joined the army as a clerical officer and travelled to many British colonies in Africa. His experience in the Second World War broadened his political views, as he "learned much (...) about the hunger and yearning for freedom of the colonized peoples"(6).

When Gakaara came back from the war in 1945 he moved away from the world that his father represented(7). He

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(5) On Alliance High School, see 1.8. I asked Gakaara whether he had read any literature there, but he stayed at Alliance for such a short time that he could not remember having read any books.

(6) Gakaara wa Wanjau, Mau Mau Author in Detention, p. x. On the importance of the Second World experience for Gakaara's generation, see 2.2.

(7) Gakaara's father thought that he "had lost the right path" and was "confused by Kenyatta's politics", Interview, Appendix 1 (see also 2.2). In spite of the differences in their outlook Gakaara has always admired his father and in 1983 he dedicated his prison diary to him (see 3.6 and also Interview, Appendix 1). He shows a similar ambivalence, in his rejection/admiration of the Christian religion that his father, as a minister, embodied. Gakaara married a Christian, Shifira Wairire (see 2.4), and baptized his children.

started reading the vernacular press and became actively involved in militant Gikuyu politics(8).

The importance of Gikuyu customs and traditions, as opposed to those imposed by colonialism, was stressed by Gikuyu politicians(9), and by Kenyatta in particular, and was emphasized by the Gikuyu press(10). Hence, it was only in the forties, through his involvement in politics that Gakaara, who had had a strict Christian upbringing, became proud of his roots and immersed himself in his Gikuyu cultural heritage.

The Gikuyu vernacular press was the strongest and most vital influence on Gakaara's thinking and writing throughout the forties and early fifties. Although he published a work of fiction in 1946(11), by his own admission, he was not interested in literature, but in politics(12). In fact, until his arrest in 1952, he dedicated himself entirely to political literature. He wrote two political pamphlets, which reflected the kind of demands that were put forward by the vernacular press(13).

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(8) See 2.

(9) In the case of the debate about female circumcision, the struggle for the preservation of this Gikuyu custom became above all a political struggle (on this topic, see 1.12).

(10) See 2.6.

(11) For an analysis of this work, see 8.1.

(12) Cf. Interview, Appendix 1.

(13) See 2.5.

He also edited a collection of political songs(14) and founded his own newspaper in Gikuyu(15).

To summarize, by the time Gakaara was arrested, it is possible to single out the following influences on his literary development: the Bible, the vernacular press and Gikuyu traditions (by means of the Gikuyu press).

7.4 The Short Story Course

As we have seen earlier on in this study, Gakaara was arrested in October 1952 and detained in various camps(16).

At Manda Island Detention Camp, from June 1954 till July 1955, he was allowed to receive a correspondence course from Britain in short story writing(17).

The short story course proved crucial to his artistic development because it gave him a theoretical basis for creative writing. Gakaara himself admits that "the course was very useful" and he "benefited a lot" from it(18). In fact, in terms of development of plot, character delineation and cohesion in general, there is a very great

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(14) See 2.10.

(15) See 2.6.

(16) See 3 and 4.

(17) See 3.5.

(18) Interview, Appendix 1.

difference between his first work of fiction and his later writings.

His increased confidence in his medium is also shown by the fact that, while he was receiving the course, he wrote several short stories in Kiswahili and published them in the newspaper Baraza (The Assembly).

The correspondence course in short story writing, issued by the former Regent Institute of London(19), was articulated in ten lessons. Unfortunately, I could only examine lessons 4-10 because Gakaara lost the first three lessons(20).

Each lesson is made up of eighteen pages in all and develops the topic, as set out in the title, in clear straightforward language. Extracts of short stories are included to exemplify each point(21).

After the lesson proper (fourteen pages) there is a Supplement (two pages), an essay on a particular aspect examined in the lesson, and a Postscript (two pages),

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(19) The present Regent Institute was founded in the early sixties and, apart from the name, has no connection with the institute which sent the correspondence course to Gakaara.

(20) The titles of the six lessons in my possession are: Getting the Human Appeal (Lesson No. 4), A Short Story Analysed, (Lesson No. 5), Types of Short Stories (Lesson No. 6), Writing the Humorous Story: The Radio Story (Lesson No. 7), Selling Your Stories (Lesson No. 8), How to Criticise Your Own Work (Lesson No. 9) and Serials, Novels and Radio Plays (Lesson No. 10).

(21) A complete short story appears only in the case of "The Dowry" by Guy de Maupassant (A Short Story Analysed, Lesson No. 5, pp. 2-14). Maupassant's stories are famous as tranches de vie and, since the emphasis of the whole course is on realism in fiction, it is not surprising that his short stories are presented as "a model" to be followed (Ibidem, p. 1).

which highlights the most important piece of advice contained in the lesson.

The student is also given some exercises to send to the institute, such as "describe a character from the author's point of view and write a dialogue"(22), or "write an original short story of not more than 3,000 words"(23). Gakaara told me that he never failed to send the exercises as requested and that the institute always sent them back duly corrected.

The lessons not only contain guidance on how to construct a story, how to find ideas and how to present them with purpose in plot shape, but also give some practical advice on paragraphing, punctuation, and so on.

The tone of the authors of the course is simple, colloquial and their language is tailored to the non-specialized reader. They explain, for instance, that style means "good writing"(24), a term that Gakaara often uses in talking.

The course is addressed to inexperienced writers, but takes it for granted that they know at least the names of the most important contemporary writers in all languages and have read the classics of English literature. We can say that the course is directed to people of average education, who have studied up to secondary school level (or beyond).

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(22) Lesson No. 4, op. cit., p. 14.

(23) Ibidem, p. 14.

(24) Lesson No. 9, op. cit., p. 6.

The approach is traditional, the models are Victorian authors like C. Dickens and R.L. Stevenson and no attention is paid to writers, like J. Joyce or V. Woolf, who were moving away from the established conventions of time and plot and were experimenting with new techniques(25). Only in a few cases are extracts of stories by non-British writers included.

Let us now examine the main guidelines which seem to have had such a strong influence on Gakaara such he follows them in the works he wrote after his release.

1) IMPORTANCE OF REALISM

Realism in fiction is the basic tenet of the course. To the authors, a story, to be a good story, must first of all be realistic: "[It] must win instant recognition from the reader: 'Ah! he will say to himself. 'This man knows what he is talking about'. And he will read on with increased confidence and interest"(26).

This is exactly what Gakaara is aiming at in his writings. His stories are so probable that his readers often perceive them as real. He told me, for instance, that they could not believe that he was not in Nairobi at

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(25) As we shall see later on in this section, the emphasis of the course is on realism and thus those authors who were questioning the concept of reality and time could not be included.

(26) Lesson No. 4, op. cit., p. 2.

the time of the attempted coup in 1982 because his description of the disorders in Wa-Nduuta Hingo ya Paawa (Wa-Nduuta at the Time of the Coup) were "too realistic"(27).

2) PRIMACY OF DIALOGUE

In the course great importance is attributed to dialogues: "You can work up human appeal either by direct description or through dialogue and action, and the second way is usually more effective than the first. It is naturally more interesting to see an event or hear people talking for ourselves, than to learn about what was done or said at second-hand from a description by the author; so whenever possible you should let your plot develop through conversation and action among your characters"(28).

In the authors view, dialogues must be as realistic as possible: "Don't be afraid to let your characters talk like the real people you want the reader to believe them to be"(29).

Gakaara's characters are ordinary people and their talk is close to everyday idiom. He uses idiomatic expressions and characteristic talk, especially when he

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(27) Interview, Appendix 1.

(28) Lesson No. 4, op. cit., pp. 3-4.

(29) Ibidem, p. 5.

wants to achieve a humorous effect, as in the case of wa-Nduuta who is completely drunk and talks nonsense to the policeman in Ndugeta Ungi Maraya (Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute).

3) "ESSENTIAL" DESCRIPTIONS

According to the authors, the story must be reduced to its dramatic essentials and all unnecessary characters and descriptions cut out. Long descriptive passages must be avoided to give as much space as possible to dialogues: "The briefer the description, the better (...) Let your characters help to describe themselves (and one another, if necessary) through their talk, actions and perhaps thought"(30).

In the authors' view there is no room in a modern story for unnecessary descriptions: "It is no use describing how beautiful your heroine is, or how handsome your hero is, unless that beauty has an effect on one of the other characters"(31).

This is precisely what Gakaara does. He does not describe his characters' physical appearance, unless it is relevant to the plot. For instance, we do not know whether the protagonist of Ngwenda Unjurage (I Want You to Kill Me) is pretty, but we are told that Nyamigathi's daughter,

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(30) Ibidem, p. 4.

(31) Lesson No. 5, op. cit., p. 12.

in Wa-Nduuta Akiandikithia Muiritu (Wa-Nduuta Finds a Job for a Girl), is beautiful because her looks attracts Jeneti's husband and his concupiscence is crucial to the development of the story.

4) SHORTNESS

The authors advise the student to reduce his short stories to their essentials: "Is there anything at all, even a single word, that you can cut without loss of meaning or effect?"(32).

Gakaara's stories are very short, so he is very careful to avoid unnecessary words and passages. But, by his own choice, he often on purpose repeats concepts and words to emphasize the moral.

5) ORDINARY CHARACTERS

The course stresses the importance of writing about ordinary people with "simple human problems", imagining their reactions in a given situation: "You must make a point of getting acquainted with ordinary people (...) It is the clerk, farmer, shopkeeper, housewife and businessgirl who most often drawn on for their ability to

(32) Lesson No. 9, op. cit., p. 10.

show the attractive facets of simple human problems treated skilfully and imaginatively"(33).

Gakaara is extremely observant and he is so clever at depicting true-to-life people that some of his readers believe that wa-Nduuta is a real person. The author is particularly proud of having achieved this effect(34).

The student is also invited to observe and study the people who surround him wherever he is because "wherever men live (...) there you will find plots for your short stories (...) There are plots at your doorstep - in fact, there are plots everywhere. All you need to do is to look, listen - think!"(35).

Gakaara not only followed this piece of advice in composing his fictional works, but also in his study of Gikuyu clans, which he wrote while in detention.

He could find a good topic for writing even "at the doorstep" of the detention camp, by observing his fellow-detainees. He explains in his diary that he "had been lucky in that all the ten Gikuyu clans were represented in Manda Island Detention Camp. This book describes the Gikuyu clans as well as the character-traits

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(33) "Write about Ordinary People", Postscript to Lesson No. 4, op. cit., pp. 17-18.

(34) Interview, Appendix 1.

(35) "There Are Plots at Your Doorstep", Postscript to Lesson No. 9, op. cit., p. 18.

associated with people from each clan. It explains if they are querulous, witchdoctors or close-fisted, and so on"(36).

6) TOPIC

The authors invite the students to write about people and topics he is thoroughly familiar with.

In the interview, Gakaara explained that he cannot write about what he does not know. This is the reason why, he claims, he can only write about the Gikuyu, as he "does not know" about other ethnic groups(37).

7) THE AUDIENCE

The course stresses the importance of having a specific audience and market in mind when writing: "You must have some kind of reader in mind as you wrote, and if

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(36) Diary, Gikuyu original p. 133. I did not quote the English translation by Ngigi Njoroge published by Heinemann because the translation of the above passage is particularly inaccurate. It reads: "I had been lucky in that all the nine [sic] Gikuyu clans were represented in Manda island. This book describes the characteristics of each Gikuyu clan as well as the character-traits associated with people from each clan. Are people from the clan querulous?, given to magic and inclined to medicine [sic]?, close-fisted?, and so on" (English translation, pp. 169-170).

Firstly, kenda muiyuru (Gikuyu original p. 133) means "nine full", that is to say ten. Secondly muri andu a arogi, means "they are witchdoctors". Apart from actual mistakes in the translation, punctuation is not correct and the English is clumsy. Moreover, the translator, turning from indirect to direct speech does not respect the original.

(37) Interview, Appendix 1.

you did not consciously associate that reader with any particular type of market you must do so now"(38).

As we shall see later on in this study, all Gakaara's works, from the very beginning, have been tailored to his readers, always addressing those issues which they felt strongly about(39).

8) WRITING FOR SELLING

The aim of the course is not only to give the student the tools to write short stories, but also "saleable" material.

Realism in fiction is not only essential to the writing of "good stories", but also indispensable for their sale: "If you are to sell your stories readily, you must spare no effort to produce an effect of reality"(40).

Writing should not be, in the authors' view, an aim in itself, but a business. They invite the student to see through the editor's eyes when writing a story and thus to produce material which that will meet the expectations of the readers: "One of the best resolutions you can make as a fiction writer is that you will always try to give the

(38) Selling Your Stories, Lesson No. 8. p. 1.

(39) See 8.

(40) Types of Short Stories, Lesson No. 6, p. 13.

reader good value for his money by inventing stories with real body in them, stories full of human interest"(41).

Writing for publication is, to the authors, "a one-man job, just as much a business as running a small factory. The successful writer, therefore, must be at one and the same time both manager of his workshop and head of his sales department (...) The more work you turn out, the more you dispose of, even if your percentage of sales stays the same. And why should it always remain low? This means hard work, but if you aren't prepared for that, believe me you will never be a successful free-lance writer, constant hard work is the real secret"(42).

Gakaara, as a writer and publisher, is particularly concerned about selling his works and has always had a strong business sense. In the interview he told me that one must write to sell, otherwise it is "no business"(43).

Gakaara's publishing house is entirely his responsibility, a real "one-man job", and, from the very beginning, he has worked extremely hard as a writer and a publisher. Both the course and his Protestant upbringing may have enjoined hard work as a positive value.

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(41) "Give the Reader Value for His Money", Postscript to No. 8, op. cit., p. 17.

(42) "Studying the Market", Supplement to No. 10, op. cit., pp. 15-16.

(43) Interview, Appendix 1.

9) THE SERIAL

A section of the course which may have particularly influenced Gakaara's future activities is "Writing the Serial".

The authors explain that a serial can be a profitable venture, and go on to give some advice on how to write a successful one. To start with, the hero must be an interesting character and the first instalment must arouse the curiosity of the readers: "You must produce an attractive character, you must start him (or her) talking, and you must push him into action. In the first instalment, also, you must give the reader some problem big enough, some interest strong enough, to make the reader feel it will last out all the subsequent instalments"(44). Secondly, each instalment, instead of being brought to a satisfying climax, must end with a crisis that will leave the reader eager to go on to the next instalment to see what happens there: "You begin, naturally, with an attractive heroine or hero, and then surround her or him with portents of trouble or a problem that will allow of plenty of complications"(45).

Gakaara must have treasured the above advice when he set out to write the "wa-Nduuta saga". He created an "attractive character" who cannot help getting himself

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(44) No. 10, p. 6.

(45) Serials, Novels and Radio Plays, Lesson No. 10, p. 14.

into trouble, or in difficult situations, in each new adventure. Often, the story ends in the following issue of the magazine, thus leading the readers on to buying the next number.

10) WRITE UNDER ANY CONDITIONS

The student is advised to write, even if he is not in the best condition for work: "It may well be that the way in which you have to work is not the way in which you would like to work (...) But it is surprising what can be done with a little determination (...)"(46).

This piece of advice seems particularly appropriate in the case of Gakaara, who was being sent the course while in detention, and it must have encouraged him to go on studying and writing.

We have seen that the main points made in the course closely reflect the salient features of the works that Gakaara wrote after his release. Let us now consider those aspects which, although emphasized in the course, are not present in Gakaara's writings and also those elements, which, on the contrary, are not to be found in the course, but do feature as important elements in his stories.

(46) How to Criticise Your Own Work, Lesson No. 9, p. 1.

1) SUSPENCE

In "A Self-Criticism Questionnaire" the authors stress the importance of not giving the plot away at the beginning of the story. They suggest that the student should ask himself the question "Does suspence increase steadily?"(47), when checking whether the plot is properly developed.

In most of Gakaara's works the readers know the ending of the stories from the very beginning. Even the title itself is often revealing, as is the case with, for instance, Wa-Nduuta Akiandikithia Muiritu (Wa-Nduuta Finds a Job for a Girl)(48), which tells that, in the end, the girl will get a job with the help of wa-Nduuta.

Gakaara's prefaces often give some further details on the plot, summarizing the main events and stressing the moral of the story.

The reason why Gakaara deliberately chooses to explain how the story develops and ends can be found in his concern for an element which is totally absent in the short story course: the moral.

2) DIDACTICISM

The authors of the short story course completely ignore the fact that fiction can be didactic. To them, the aim of

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(47) Lesson No. 9, op. cit., p. 9.

(48) Wa-Nduuta Finds a Job for a Girl, Appendix 2.6.

any "good story" is to entertain the reader with life-like situations and characters.

Gakaara, on the other hand, considers the didactic element extremely important and believes that the moral, or the "teaching", as he calls it, is the most important aspect of his works(49).

He is so anxious to point out the moral of his stories that he often summarizes the plots in his prefaces so that the "teaching" contained in them may stand out. Thus, we can say that Gakaara highlights the moral at the expense of suspence.

7.5 The Short Story Course and the Bible

We can say that in many respects the main features of the Bible and the guidelines in the short story course reinforce each other.

In the case of the Bible we can talk of an "indirect", or subliminal influence, which Gakaara is perhaps unaware of. In fact, when I questioned him about the books he read when he was young he answered that he had read none because "there were no books in Gikuyu". Though, when I asked about the Bible, I discovered that not only had he "enjoyed reading" it, but also that his father used to read passages to the family in the evening(50).

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(49) See Interview, Appendix 1.

(50) Ibidem.

In contrast, the course can be considered a "direct" or acknowledged influence, since Gakaara himself admits that it was extremely important to his literary development(51).

(51) Ibidem. The fact itself that Gakaara has kept the course for almost twenty years reveals the importance he attributes to it.

8. THE FICTIONAL WRITINGS

8.1 Gakaara's First Work of Fiction

Gakaara's first published story, Uhoro wa Ugurani (The Story of a Marriage)(1), is an anomalous work in his production and deserves particular attention.

I have already remarked that in the forties Gakaara's interests were mostly centred on politics and Gikuyu traditional customs. But, although the other booklets he published in the same period reflect the political issues debated in the vernacular press, this work does not. Moreover, the story is set among Christian converts who do not comply with Gikuyu traditions, or rather follow Gikuyu customs only in part.

Two possible reasons, which do not exclude one another, can be advanced to explain why this work is dissimilar from the other writings by Gakaara. The first may be that his sister had influenced him and the second that he had not yet mastered his craft(2).

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(1) The narrative was first published in 1946 as Uhoro wa Ugurani (The Story of a Marriage) and subsequently reprinted under different titles (see 11.2). It is commonly known under its latest title, Ngwenda Unjurage (I Want You to Kill Me). On this work, see also 2.4 and 4.3. For the English translation, see Appendix 2.1.

(2) We have seen earlier on in this study that only in the fifties did Gakaara acquire the theoretical bases for creative writing (see 7.4).

The story is based on a real event, the suicide of a schoolmate of Mary Watare, one of Gakaara's sisters(3). She wrote the preface to the book, where she explains that her brother asked her to recount the story "because a lot of people had heard about it"(4), but wanted to know the whole story. On the same page, two photos appear, one of Gakaara, above the caption "the publisher of this story" (although he told me that he actually wrote it)(5) and the other of his sister, above the caption "the narrator of this story"(6).

It is not easy to understand whether Gakaara wrote the story alone or whether his sister helped him, or partially helped him. A possible approach, which remains somewhat approximate, is to single out the features which characterize this story, but are not common to the other works by Gakaara.

1) "ROMANTIC" LANGUAGE

In the light of stylistic differences, the hypothesis of his sister's intervention, at least in some parts of the story, seems to be plausible.

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(3) Gakaara has four sisters. He had three brothers, but one died in an accident in the seventies (see 5.4).

(4) See English translation of the 1951 edition, Appendix 2.1. In the interview Gakaara confirmed that the story narrated in the book was true, although he changed some details (cf. Interview, Appendix 1).

(5) Ibidem.

(6) I Want You to Kill Me, Appendix 2.1.

In some crucial points language is very similar to that of romantic stories in women's magazines, a literature that Gakaara knew nothing about. For instance in the letter that the girl writes to her boyfriend before committing suicide(7):

> "My darling,
>
> My hands tremble when I think that you are the one I am writing this letter to. I want to thank you for having loved me for so long, and because you have always made me happy. I am not ashamed of telling you that my heart loves you more than anybody else here on earth, and I beg you to remember me for ever (...)"(8).

A very similar form of language can be found at another decisive point in the story, when the young man reads the girl's letter after her death:

> "The young man took the letter and began to read it. He concentrated on each word he read and, as these words sank deeply into his heart, he was overcome with grief and his hands, and his whole body with them, began to tremble"(9).

2) PRIMACY OF THIRD-PERSON NARRATION

Dialogues take up only a small part of the story, which is told in the third person by the omniscient narrator. On the contrary, in all Gakaara's stories but

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(7) We shall see later on in this section that the letter plays a very important role in the plot.

(8) I Want You to Kill Me, Appendix 2.1.

(9) Ibidem.

this, speech acts make up the greater part of the narrative. Lively dialogues are not only a constant feature of his works, but also their strong point, whereas, in this story, the author tends to use the same language both in direct and indirect speech and dialogues are often non-realistic.

3) PUNCTUATION

Punctuation is very loose and the story does not read smoothly. Confusion also arises from the use of pronouns, so that it is not always clear who said what.

4) COHESION

On reading this story one gets the impression that the author had no general plan in mind when he wrote it.

The story is not well-constructed and is full of incongruities. The young man, for instance, after breaking the marriage agreement, goes to Nairobi and swears never to marry. He does not meet his former fiancée before leaving, but she knows, all the same, about his secret vow. She writes in her letter addressed to the young man: "(...) You have come to reject all women because of me (...)"(10).

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(10) Ibidem.

5) GIKUYU CUSTOMS?

Although in this story the author seems to rely on Gikuyu customs, he does not in reality. For example:

- The young man goes to the girl's father and begins to pay the dowry and "do all the things which the Gikuyu do when arranging a marriage". Actually a marriage was not arranged by the suitor and the girl's father, but the girl's father and the suitor's father(11), who in this story does not appear at all.

- The young man refuses to run away with the girl because he does not want them to "live in sin". He is clearly talking of "sin" according to Christian tenets. In fact, by Gikuyu customary law he could have eloped with her because he had already given some cattle and money to his prospective father-in-law. If he had run away with her and then appealed to the kiama, the council of elders, they would have settled the case.

- People want to know whether the girl cast a dying curse on her father, but, traditionally, an unmarried woman could not cast such a curse(12).

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(11) See e.g. Leakey, L.S.B., The Southern Kikuyu before 1903, London, Academic Press 1977, Vol. 2 and Cagnolo, Costanzo op. cit., Chapter 6.

(12) Cf. C.W. Hobley's Bantu Beliefs and Magic, London, H.F. & Whiterby 1922, Chapter 7.

- When the elder is in prison the young man looks after his family, whereas, according to Gikuyu customs, the elder's brothers and relations should have looked after his wife and daughter.

In his later writings (e.g. in Ni Nii Ndina Nyarwimbo, "Me and Nyarwimbo") Gakaara will be more careful in "teaching the Gikuyu customs" and show how they can help his people to face their everyday problems and eventually solve them.

Whereas it may be possible to detect the influence of Gakaara's sister in the "romantic" language of some parts of the story, it would be highly speculative to attribute all the peculiarities of the book to her and her alone.

We should not forget that Gakaara had no previous writing experience when he published this book. Hence, it is not improbable that stylistic flaws as well as the numerous incongruities of the plot derive from his lack of experience. But, if, on the one hand, we cannot find in Uhoro wa Ugurani (The Story of a Marriage) several characteristics of Gakaara's later works, on the other hand, some essential features of his later writings are already present.

1) GIKUYU PROVERBS AND SAYINGS

At the level of vocabulary we find an influence of Gikuyu oral literature in Gakaara's first story. In some

parts of the narration at least, he uses Gikuyu proverbs and sayings, as he does in all his writings.

4) QUOTATIONS FROM THE BIBLE

In this story, just as in all Gakaara's works, we find numerous Gikuyu proverbs and sayings co-existing with the final quotation from the Bible to underline the moral of the story ("Blessed are the Meek", Matthew 5:5).

5) TOPIC

In his writings Gakaara has always addressed real present-day problems. In his first book he deals with the issue of bridewealth which his audience felt strongly about in the forties. At that time, in fact, many people were pressing the elders to fix a reasonably low bridewealth and often accused them of being greedy, as is the girl's father in the story(13).

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(13) In the forties the debate on bridewealth was being discussed in vernacular newspapers and in reader's letters addressed to them. The common view was that dowry was too high. Some people suggested the possibility of abolishing dowry, dismissing it as a useless legacy of the past, others were against it because it would have meant the abandonment of tribal traditions.

Traditionally, a Gikuyu woman was not considered somebody's wife until the dowry had been paid or, at least, agreed upon. Only in this case would her children be considered her husband's (otherwise they belonged to the woman's father). In the forties there were many law suits because people often failed to pay the fixed dowry after marriage. The problem was submitted to the administration, but they refused to interfere with what they did not consider a matter of public interest, but only the private concern of the people involved.

6) THE IMPORTANCE OF WEALTH

The protagonists of this story are well-off people like many other characters in Gakaara's works (the young man is "very wealthy", the girl's father owns land and cattle and his daughters went to school because they can read and write).

The author stresses the importance of wealth and of getting rich. He praises the entrepreneurial attitude of the young man who succeeds in opening a shop(14), but he also admonishes his audience against greed (embodied by the girl's father) and miserly obsession.

7) GAKAARA'S AUDIENCE

The story is set among Christian converts, who only partly comply with Gikuyu traditions (e.g. the payment of dowry). All Gakaara's characters, and his first book is no exception, come from the converted Gikuyu petty bourgeoisie (shop owners, smallholders, clerks) and, from the very beginning, his books are directed to them.

In the new class of literate Gikuyu there was not only a demand for vernacular newspapers, but also one for books which talked about them(15) and were relevant to

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(14) See also 5.5.

(15) In his preface to Ngwenda Unjurage (I Want You to Kill Me), for instance, Gakaara writes that "many people have heard about the story of that girl who killed herself and wanted to know how it ended and why the girl's boyfriend had put a photo on her bosom before she was buried" (I Want You to Kill Me, Appendix 2.1).

their problems. There was particular need for these especially in a period of transition, when people were torn between Gikuyu traditional customs and "modern" ways. Thus Gakaara created a new literature to satisfy their demand.

8) THE WRITTEN WORD

What is most striking in the story is the importance attributed to the written word as opposed to the spoken, a common feature of all Gakaara's works.

If we consider that the story is set in the forties, when very few people could write, the author's insistence on the "power" of the written word may seem somewhat strange(16). Let us examine the characteristics of the spoken and written word in this book.

- The spoken word is not binding and can be withdrawn. In fact, the oral agreement between the elder and his daughter's suitor proves to be ineffective and the two parties break it very easily. Similarly, the young man swears never to marry and he later on disregards his muhingo, "prohibition".

- Words can be misunderstood when spoken (e.g. the girl's words to her father, before committing suicide),

(16) I shall explain later on in this study why Gakaara's insistence on the importance of the written word is only apparently strange (see 10.20).

whereas the written word (the letters written by the girl before committing suicide) cannot.

Everybody in the story attributes unquestionable power to the written word.

The girl is particularly conscious of the "weakness" of the spoken word and, instead of explaining her reasons for killing herself to her relatives and boyfriend, she writes letters to them so that she cannot be misunderstood. Similarly, when the girl commits suicide, her sister looks for something written to understand what has happened (she "tried to find out whether there might be a note she had left in her boxes, but she could not find even a single paper regarding what had happened"). Even the police, who come "to investigate the reason why the girl had committed suicide", cannot solve the case until they find the girl's letters.

- The spoken word can be deceitful, whereas the written word, as a kind of document, must necessarily be true. In fact, although the girl's father "tries to hide the truth" from the police, "he could not do so because the whole story was written in the letter". Nobody questions the content of the letters written by the girl before committing suicide and they constitute irrefutable evidence for the police and the judge.

- The written word is a more effective means of communication not only as far as personal relationships are involved. In spite of the fact that in the forties the percentage of people who could read was very low, the news

of the girl's suicide reaches people not by word of mouth, but because it is written in newspapers ("the news of the girl's suicide had spread to many places in a short time because the story had been immediately reported in the newspapers").

- The written word has also got a mystical power because it is "immortal". The photo of her boyfriend, the girl wants to be buried with, seems to possess the characteristics of the written word. It is a kind of "written image" of her boyfriend and, as such, represents a sort of document, a "guarantee" that their love will last for ever.

9) THE "INTERNAL" AUDIENCE

There is an audience "within" the story which is witness to the most important events and reacts to them. They listen to the policeman who investigates the case of the girl's suicide, go to the girl's funeral and attend the trial of the girl's father. Although they react emotionally and comment on the facts, they do not influence the development of the plot, as happens in Gakaara's later works(17).

(17) See e.g. Me and Nyarwimbo, Appendix 2.2.

10) DIDACTICISM

The didactic element is already present in Gakaara's first work, as he wants to explain, for instance, how a police investigation is carried out, how a court of law works, how a postmortem is conducted. But the moral of the story, exemplified by the quotation from the Bible which closes the book, "Blessed are the Meek", does not really present a solution to the problem of bridewealth.

In his first book Gakaara limits himself to setting out a particular problem which affects Gikuyu society, whereas later on he will present solutions. The urge to teach a moral will shape all his writings.

8.2 The Nature of the Narratives

Gakaara's stories consist of simple narrative units controlled by fixed rules of combination and this narrative framework is what the success of the wa-Nduuta saga is based on.

Gakaara's narratives are built on a definite series of oppositions of characters and values which allow a limited number of interactions. The clash between the opposite poles gives rise to the stories which all end with the conflicts appeased, according to a fixed scheme.

This is the usual scheme of the traditional tale(18), but also of escapist literature(19), such as detective and romantic stories. These books are extremely popular in Kenya, especially among those classes of people who have reached a primary or secondary level of education. The reader enjoys a game, the rules and endings of which are known, and his pleasure derives from what is known, rather than from what is not. In this context the rhetoric of the narrative discourse is, according to the original meaning given to the word by Aristotle, the art of persuading based on endoxa, or commonly accepted clichés.

In the case of Gakaara we cannot talk of escapist literature because the values on which he bases his stories are no longer shared by the majority of the Gikuyu. We may say that the author claims to rely on a set of shared values, both traditional and Christian, with the precise intent of convincing his readers that these values constitute a common background. According to the author these are the only values his people can cling to if they want to interpret and survive the chaos of modern life.

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(18) Propp proposed a series of thirty-one functions which, he maintained, regularly recur in sequence in the many Russian folktales he had analysed (see: Vladimir Propp, The Morphology of the Folktale, Indiana University Press 1958). Propp's categories are not appropriate to many sets of folkstories and the author himself agreed that his analytical methods were not suitable for the folktales of Grimm and Andersen.

(19) Cf. e.g. Umberto Eco's analysis of Fleming's '007' narratives: "Le strutture narrative in Fleming", essay contained in Roland Barthes et al. L'analisi del racconto, Milano, Bompiani 1969, pp. 123-162.

The distinction between what is right and what is wrong is only apparently clear-cut in Gakaara's stories and his characters often present conflicting personalities and behaviours. Wa-Nduuta himself has very little in common with the hero of traditional Gikuyu tales or with the protagonists of those detective stories which are so popular in Kenya, and he embodies all the contradictions of the modern hero(20).

The problems tackled by the author are not only ethical, but also social. And even when matters such as criminality or unemployment are not the actual subject of his stories, they remain in the background, as in Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute.

If on the one hand Gakaara is forced to come to terms with a complex reality dominated by insecurity, on the other hand he does not want to renounce his role of guide to his people. Hence his attempt to create a fictional world as similar as possible to the real world, but where each act, good or evil, is accordingly rewarded or condemned by human or divine justice.

The author's didacticism does not lie simply in the teaching of how to solve a particular problem, but more generally, in his overall aim of instilling a sense of order and justice in his readers. Thus, through the presentation of his stories as a mirror of reality, he tries to help his people to face the difficulties of everyday life.

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(20) On the character of wa-Nduuta, see 10.17.

8.3 The Narrator

Some novels, especially in Western literature, make full use of the distinction between the author level and the narrator level. There may be a number of "I" narrators none of whom can be assumed to be the author.

Gakaara wants the moral of his stories to be as clear as possible, hence he does not want to "confuse" his readers employing literary devices common in Western literature, such as the use of an implied author. Moreover, we should not understimate the fact that Gakaara's audience is made up of people who are not used to reading literature and would be disconcerted by the use of an implied author or an "unreliable" narrator. The stylistic complexity of the text would affect the successful communication of the message and hence the understanding of the moral which is crucial in Gakaara's narratives.

Gakaara prefers to employ an "impersonal" style of narration in the third person to convey a sense of "objectivity" to his audience(21). Even when he is himself a character in the story, as in Nyakinyua the Political Activist and Me and Nyarwimbo, he makes only a few remarks in the first person (usually at the beginning of the book), but the narrative is almost entirely told by an omniscient

(21) Gakaara employs the third-person style of narration in all his writings but Mawendo Mithemba 16 (16 Kinds of Love), which is his only work in verses. For the English translation, see Appendix 2.4.

narrator. To counterbalance an eventual sense of estrangement he relies on several stylistic devices aimed at producing a sense of personal relationship with his audience. For example he gives details that they will perceive as "personal", such as the action of the story taking place in Gakaara's hometown, Karatina.

The author also addresses his readers directly, not by the use of rhetorical questions, but by a change of tense from past (the norm for the relation of stories in the novel) to the generic "timeless" present, writing statements such as "what the Gikuyu do when arranging a marriage"(22). Even the use of the "internal" audience can be looked on as a way of addressing the reader directly and eliciting judgements on the events and characters in the narrative.

The author totally identifies with his readers and his readers identify him with the omniscient narrator. Hence they rely on his "unquestionable" authorial guidance in describing and interpreting the events.

Gakaara's audience know the author is the narrator and that is why he does not need to use a first person narrator to produce a personal relationship with the reader, as is the case with Western fiction.

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(22) I Want You to Kill Me, Appendix 2.1.

9. THE STRUCTURE OF GAKAARA'S NARRATIVES

9.1 A Note on Methodology

The semiologic study of literature may be divided into two areas of investigation: the analysis of the narrative discourse and the description of the rules governing the fictional world.

In this chapter we shall concentrate on the structure of Gakaara's narratives, leaving aside, for the moment, the narrative discourse.

It is important to remember that the word "structure", as used in structuralist theory, differs from its meaning in rhetorical criticism. "Structure" in rhetorical criticism generally means "pattern" or "arrangement", whereas "structure", as used by the structuralists, does not refer primarily to the internal organization or arrangement of a text: structure is the hidden or underlying configuration that can offer some explanation for the more or less visible or obvious pattern in the text(1).

Historically, structuralism is the application of principles derived from Saussurian linguistics to other

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(1) There are many definitions of "structure" in the structuralist sense. For a discussion of the use of the word "structure", see: Umberto Eco, La struttura assente, Milano, Bompiani 1968.

areas of academic discourse. The origin of the structural analysis of narrative is Propp's The Morphology of the Folktale, a work which underlies a good deal of later analytical theory. Since its publication in 1928(2), scholars have developed complex methodologies, all of which have their advantages and disadvantages and reflect their formulator's particular ways of viewing the structuralist enterprise(3).

In my view, the most useful methodologies for analysing a literary text are those established by Barthes, Bremond, Genette, Lèvi-Strauss and Todorov, but there is no need to follow only one of these methodologies, just as there is no need to exclude other procedures of analysis.

I believe, with Roland Barthes(4), that the structural analysis of a narrative is not a science or a

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(2) The English translation appeared in 1958 and the French translation in 1965.

(3) For a discussion of structuralism in historical perspective, see: Ernest, Gellner, "What is Structuralism?", The Times Literary Supplement, July 31, 1981, pp. 881 ff. For a history and critique of the structuralist tradition and its legacy, see: Leonard, Jackson, The Poverty of Structuralism: Literature and Structuralist Theory, London, Longman 1991.

(4) Barthes differentiates his approach from that of the historical-critical scholars by disavowing any scientific or even disciplinary claims for his methodology, which he simply called a "way of proceeding" in his research (see: "Introduction à l'analyse structurale du récit", Communications, No. 8, 1966, pp. 1-127, English

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discipline and that narrative is too complex to be reduced to a single paradigmatic model. For this reason, in analysing Gakaara's narratives, I shall mainly follow the guidelines proposed by Claude Bremond in his "Le message narratif" and Logique du récit, but also methodological notions derived from other authors. Furthermore, the fact that the structuralist sees the text as a manifestation of various kinds of structures (semantic, linguistic, narrative, mythical, etc.) and analyses it in terms of these structures, does not mean that we should not concern ourselves with those aspects studied by traditional criticism, such as the economic, political and social forces which find their expression through a particular author.

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translation in, Image Music, Text, New York, Hill and Wang 1977). Barthes abandoned structuralism towards the end of his life and in S/Z (Seuil, Paris 1970) acknowledged the impossibility of establishing a universal network of relations characteristic of narratives, and finally concluded that the primary role of literature is iconoclastic in relation to the power of language.

In contrast to Barthes' approach is that of Greimas, who tried to develop a 'scientific' single structural narrative model, instead of engaging in the practical analysis of literary texts (see: Semantiques structurale, Paris, Larousse 1966 and Du Sens (Paris, Seuil 1970).

Greimas's method has been strongly criticized by Bremond in his Logique du récit (Paris, Seuil 1973).

2.2 The Structure of the Narratives

In order to uncover its structure, a text must be formalised. The method of procedure followed by Bremond(5) (who derived it from Propp) is to decompose the content of the initial text into significant units, or **functions**(6). These functions (actions and events) are the smallest units of a narrative and they may be grouped into sequences.

The narrative may be considered as a structural framework of sequences which are related to one another. This relation is possible only in terms of actions which take place between an initial situation and a final situation, and which are performed by selected actors, the characters.

The simplest sequence, or **elementary sequence**, is composed of three functions: the first, or opening function, allows an event or form of behaviour to take place, the second gives the event or behaviour concrete form, and the third closes the process in the form of a subsequent result.

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(5) Claude Bremond developed his own logic of narrative in terms of logic of possible choices which I found particularly stimulating.

(6) Barthes uses the term "codes", Genette "figures". Even standard expression of structuralism, such as "code", "message" and "sequence" sometimes have different meanings for different authors.

The opening and closing functions are particularly important in the analysis of a text because a structuralist reading of any narrative presupposes a need to transform an initial situation, usually a **lack** which must be overcome by the end of the narrative.

The three functions which compose the elementary sequence do not necessarily follow one after the other, as the author may decide to give a different turn to the events. Thus, the simple sequence can be represented as follows:

	Realization	Result achieved
Potentiality (for an event or behaviour to take place) -->	--> Lack of realization	Failure to achieve the result

Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute, for instance, opens with wa-Nduuta insulting Jeneti because he is too drunk to understand what he is doing(7). The elementary sequence can be diagrammed as follows:

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(7) The plot can be summarized as follows: wa-Nduuta insults Jeneti (the wife of a lawyer, a "big man in the government") and she calls the police. They come and arrest the man who was trying to escape. When she gets home, Jeneti explains what happened to her husband and the next day they go together to the police station to talk to wa-Nduuta. At first the man protests his innocence, then he understands that he cannot lie to Jeneti's husband and admits his fault. In the end wa-Nduuta is forgiven and released. In the follow-up to the story, published at the

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Potentiality:		Realization:		Result achieved:
wa-Nduuta is drunk he may say or do something	->	wa-Nduuta insults Jeneti	->	damage inflicted Jeneti is no longer a "respectable woman", but "a prostitute"

The elementary sequences combine into complex sequences to form the narrative. The scheme of Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute may be represented as a concatenation of two elementary sequences where the same action (wa-Nduuta's insult) performs two different functions: it closes the offender's sequence (that of wa-Nduuta) at the same time opening that of the avenger (Jeneti's husband), according to the following scheme:

Wa-Nduuta:		Jeneti's husband:
Damage to be inflicted \/ Insult \/ Damage inflicted	=	Wrong to be righted \/ Process of compensation \/ Wrong righted

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end of If You Become a Christian... We'll Get Married, wa-Nduuta meets Jeneti by chance and rescues her from the thugs who attacked her, saving her life. Jeneti and her husband decide to recompense wa-Nduuta by giving him a job and he becomes Jeneti's chauffeur.

It is possible thus to draw, following the guidelines proposed by Bremond, the scheme of the sequences which make up the narrative movement.

9.3 Narrative Sequences

Each narrative consists of a sequence of events meant to achieve a certain result by the end of the story.

In Gakaara's narratives the first function presents an obstacle, a task to be accomplished, or introduces an element of conflict corresponding to a process of deterioration, the second consists of a process of improvement in the form of a certain behaviour or action, and the third closes the sequence by eliminating the obstacle. The events can either further or hinder the achievement of the final result. Thus, we can distinguish two sequences:

1. process of improvement

Obstacle to be overcome (process of deterioration)	-->	Process of improvement	-->	Elimination of the obstacle

2. process of deterioration

Obstacle to be overcome (process of deterioration)	-->	Further process of deterioration	-->	Failure to eliminate the obstacle

In Gakaara's narratives the process of improvement does not follow a straight line and the two sequences above are always combined so that we find an alternation of a process of improvement and one of deterioration. Usually, two processes of improvement follow one after the other because the result attained after the first is not wholly satisfying. The author then introduces a stage of deterioration, which will be the starting point for the final improvement, as in the case of Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute which can be diagrammed as follows:

Initial conflict --> (false) Process of improvement -->
(wa-Nduuta insults (Jeneti calls the police)
Jeneti)

Stage of deterioration -->
(Jeneti's "bad reputation")

(real) Process of improvement --> Final appeasement of the conflict
(intervention of (by negotiation)
Jeneti's husband)

9.4 Process of Improvement

Let us analyse in detail the various stages which constitute the structure of Gakaara's narratives.

9.4.1 obstacle

We have already seen that each narrative opens with the presentation of an obstacle or conflict which will be overcome or resolved by the end. The obstacle may be embodied by an agent with his own aims, who becomes the antagonist, as in the case of Waigwa in Me and Nyarwimbo(8) or the girl's father in I Want You to Kill Me(9).

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(8) The plot can summarized as follows: Nyarwimbo leaves her village to go to Nairobi with James, her boyfriend, and marry him. They take a bus for Nairobi but, Waigwa, the girl's brother, follows them, stops the bus and tries to bring his sister home with him. The intervention of an elder will solve the conflict: James will agree to pay the bridewealth and also a compensation to his father-in-law because the girl is pregnant according to the traditional Gikuyu custom.

(9) The plot can be summarized as follows: a girl is in love with a young man and they want to marry; he begins to pay dowry to his prospective father-in-law, according to the Gikuyu custom, but the elder is too greedy and, in spite of his daughter's prayers, he asks for more and more, until the young man gets so furious that he breaks the marriage agreement and the girl commits suicide. The elder is put into jail because he caused his daughter's death and, while he is in jail, he repents and the young man helps his family. When the elder gets out of jail, he feels he must pay his debt to the young man and he gives

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At the beginning of the story the protagonists lack intellectually (and practically) the means to overcome the obstacle they have to face. They do not know which measures to take because they do not comply with the appropriate norms of behaviour dictated either by tradition (as the protagonists of Me and Nyarwimbo) or by Christian religion (as Ole Mulai in If You Become a Christian...We'll Get Married(10)), or by a more general code of courtesy (as wa-Nduuta in Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute(11)). This lack corresponds to a stage of deterioration in the story, in other words, a problem to be solved. A stage of improvement must follow in order to restore the equilibrium by the end of the narrative.

9.4.2 intervention of the ally

The improvement is not due to chance, but is brought about by the intervention of an agent. This agent acts on behalf of a passive recipient, thus becoming his/her ally.

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his younger daughter in marriage to the young man without any payment of dowry.

(10) The plot can be summarized as follows: Ole Mulai, a young Maasai, falls in love with Wambui, a Gikuyu girl, and wants to marry her, but she cannot accept his proposal because he is a "heathen" and she is a devoted Christian. Wambui will convert him and God will spare his life after an accident and, in the end, the two will marry.

(11) For a detailed analysis of the verbal interchange between wa-Nduuta and Jeneti, see 10.19,

It is worth noting that women characters are always passive recipients who benefit from the help of men. Women usually cause a stage of deterioration(12) and the process of improvement seems to depend on men. Jeneti, for instance, tries to improve her situation by denouncing wa-Nduuta to the police, but in practice she ends up by finding herself in a difficult position which requires the intervention of an "experienced" ally in the person of her husband.

If the intervention of the ally is due to the accidental intermingling of two parallel and independent stories, it must be attributed to chance, otherwise the help offered must be seen in terms of an exchange of services. This exchange can take three forms:

1. the help is received by the recipient as an exchange for the aid he provides for his ally and the two partners work jointly towards the achievement of a common aim
2. the help is given in recognition of a past service on the part of the recipient and the ally acts as his debtor
3. the help is given in exchange for a future help and the ally acts as a creditor towards the recipient

The ally can be personally involved in the conflict, as it is the case with Jeneti's husband in Don't Call Anybody a

(12) On women characters, see 10.13.

Prostitute, or he can offer his help without asking anything in exchange, as it is with the elder in Me and Nyarwimbo. In the case of Wambui in If You Become a Christian..., a delicate issue like the conversion of a "heathen" to Christianity requires the intervention of God Himself, who acts as the girl's ally, saving not only the soul, but also the life, of her beloved young Maasai.

The partner, the debtor and the creditor participate in the action in virtue of a pact which may remain implicit or may result from a negotiation between the parties. This pact of mutual aid is implicit in the case of the assistance given by Jeneti's husband, as a husband and a wife ought to back each other. On the contrary, we can talk of a pact in I Want You to Kill Me, as Nyokabi helps her sister's former fiancé in exchange for his help while her father is in prison.

9.4.3 elimination of the antagonist

The antagonist may disappear without the direct intervention of an agent, when for instance he dies, or ceases opposition, and we may talk of a fortuitous improvement. But, if the elimination of the antagonist is the result of an action carried out by an ally, we may distinguish two forms:

1. pacific elimination through a negotiation which changes the antagonist into an ally

2. violent elimination through aggression

In Gakaara's narratives the elimination of the antagonist is always the result of a negotiation. The author's rejection of violence probably derives both from the Christian and the Gikuyu concepts of justice. In fact, the use of force to settle disputes is condemned by the Christian religion and also by Gikuyu customary law, as the Gikuyu judicial system was based on the notion of mediational justice(13).

To carry out a negotiation the agent must convince his opponent to become his ally. He may use either seduction or intimidation, that is to say, he can offer a service in exchange for what he wants, or he can threaten damage. If the operation is effective the two parties end up in a condition of parity and they can decide the modalities of the exchange and eventual guarantees.

The conflict between Jeneti and her antagonist wa-Nduuta is resolved by her husband through a negotiation. The lawyer does not need to threaten physical damage (eventual emprisonment), as a verbal offence can be

(13) The offenders had to pay compensation and only habitual criminals were publicly put to death with the permission of their relatives.

redeemed by a verbal excuse and wa-Nduuta is released on condition he publicly acknowledges his mistake.

Wa-Nduuta apologizes because he did "a very bad thing" by insulting the woman and he is not taken to court. The "good reputation" of Jeneti is thus restored. If on the one hand she is no longer "a prostitute", but the "respectable" wife of "a big man in the government", on the other hand wa-Nduuta is no longer a boaster and a drunkard, but a humble man who "learned from his own mistake" and swore never to drink again. The conflict is appeased and the story may end.

9.4.4 aggression

The agent opts for aggression when he tries to eliminate his opponent by inflicting damage that will annihilate him at least as an obstacle.

In Gakaara's stories violence never pays, and even when a character chooses aggression to solve a conflict, as it is with Waigwa in Me and Nyarwimbo, later on he is forced to accept negotiation because, as the Gikuyu proverb says, "A Strong Argument Breaks a Set Bow".

9.4.5 retributions: revenge and reward

The damage caused by the aggressor to his victim may be seen as an inverted service which demands in exchange that a proportional damage be inflicted. The reward for a service given and the revenge for damage inflicted are the two facets of retribution and we can distinguish between the rewarder who recompenses and the avenger who punishes.

The greedy elder in I Want You to Kill Me inflicts damage on the protagonist by not allowing him to marry his elder daughter for a reasonable amount of bride-wealth. Thus he becomes a debtor to the young man and, at the end of the story, he pays a debt proportional to the damage previously inflicted, that is to say, he gives him his younger daughter free of payment.

The opposite facet of "retribution" as recompense for a service or merit, is presented in If You Become a Christian... We'll Get Married. Wambui has mercy on Ole Mulai and God rewards her accordingly by saving her life, as the final biblical quotation stresses, "Blessed Are the Merciful For They Will Be Shown Mercy".

9.5 Process of Deterioration

A process of improvement brings about a state of equilibrium which may correspond to the end of the narrative. If the author wants to go on with his story, he

must recreate a state of tension by introducing a new conflict or obstacle. This is what happens in each new story of the wa-Nduuta saga where the conflict is either provoked by a sudden turn of events or by the appearance of a new character, or, more frequently, by a secondary character who has remained in the background till that particular moment.

9.5.1 error

Error may be considered as an inverted task: once led into error the agent acts in order to achieve a result that will prove to be the opposite of what he wanted. Moreover, he will treat his ally as enemy and vice versa.

We can see how this process works in "Who Does Not Listen to Advice Ends Up in Trouble", one of the micro-stories which form 16 Kinds of Love.

Error is due to blindness on the girl's part (she is "blinded by love"), as she claims that she can choose her lover by herself. She is warned of the danger by her mother, but she ignores her advice because in the girl's "inverted perspective" she does not see the woman as an ally, but as an enemy.The actual development of events will prove the girl's mistake, as her lover will abandon her when she gets pregnant. We can diagram the process of error as follows:

Error (the girl wants the wrong man)	--->	Warning (from the ally seen as an enemy)	--->	Warning ignored	--->	Final damage (the girl is left alone)

On the one hand the ally who conforms to the accepted rules (in this case Christian and traditional Gikuyu codes of morality) is seen as an opponent, on the other hand the opponent who helps the protagonist to break them (her lover who is only interested in the "happiness of the body") is seen as an ally. As the opponent knows the consequences of the pseudo-help he is giving, he becomes a deceiver. His actions and words (his "sweet lies") are meant to lure his victim into a trap, they are the preparatory stage for aggression (the sexual act). In other words, the deceiver simulates pacific intentions and seduces his victim by proposing an alliance (marriage), while preparing to break the pact.

The perspectives of the deceiver and his victim can be illustrated as follows:

Perspective of the deceiver		**Perspective of the deceived**
Simulation of love	vs	Acceptance of love
¦		¦
\ /		\ /
Process of simulation (promise of marriage)	vs	Process of persuasion (acceptance of promise)
¦		¦
\ /		\ /
Sexual act	=	Sexual act
¦		¦
\ /		\ /
Success of the trap	=	Error committed

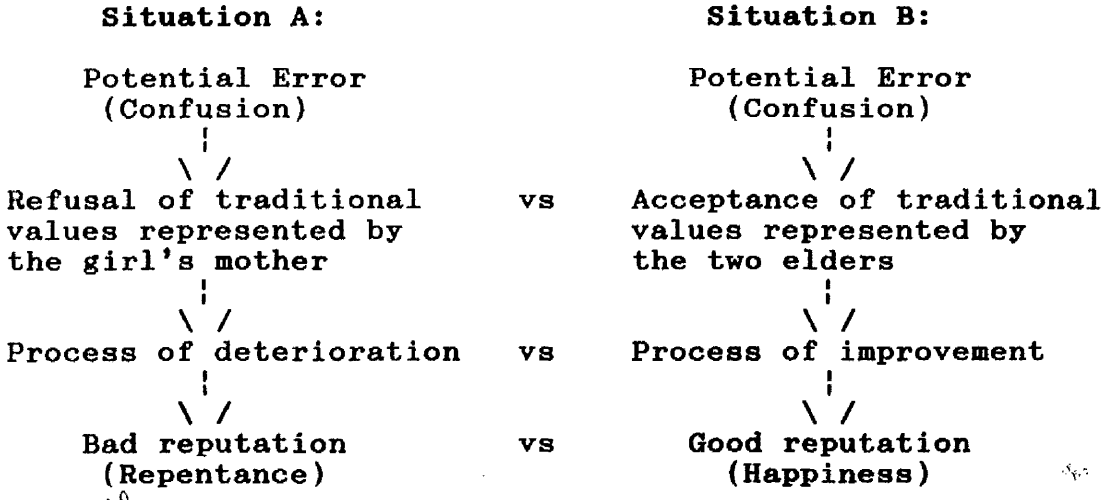
The story ends with a final stage of deterioration brought about involuntarily by the agent. Thus, the moral of the story lies in the distance which separates the damage caused (the girl is pregnant and the man has deserted her) from the result the girl intended to reach (marriage).

It is worth noting that in Gakaara's narratives only women characters seem to be induced into error, whereas even when men make mistakes, they can be repaired (e.g. wa-Nduuta's insult in Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute). In fact, at the moment the author decides to end "Who Does Not Listen to Advice Ends Up in Trouble" with a stage of deterioration, he gives no alternative to the protagonist, and she will pay for her error for the rest of her life.

Women seem to be bound to make errors, because, according to Gakaara, this is part of their "weak nature". Both Christian religion and Gikuyu traditional wisdom agree on this point, so that, as usual with the writer, we cannot know whether he is relying on the former or on the latter. I am inclined to believe that in his world-view the two are closely intermingled, as we shall see later on in this study.

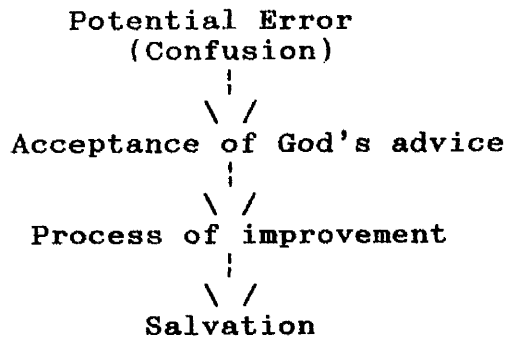
Women who comply with the Gikuyu traditional and Christian codes of behaviour are not led into error. This is the case with the newly married young woman in the micro-story "A Good Reputation Begins at Home" (contained in 16 Kinds of Love) which shows the other facet of the

problem exposed in "Who Does Not Listen to Advice Ends Up in Trouble". The two situations can be diagrammed as follows:



If on the one hand women who listen to the advice of elders do not "end up in trouble", on the other hand Wambui, in If You Become a Christian We'll Get Married, is not led into error because she follows the "word of God" written in the Bible(14), according to the following scheme:

(14) Cf. If You Become a Christian... We'll Get Married, Appendix 2.3 .



9.5.2 obligation

We have an obligation when the agent is compelled to accomplish a task on the ally's behalf in virtue of a past benefit he received from him, thus becoming his creditor.

The obligation may be the result of a contract stipulated in a previous part of the narrative, as in the cases of I Want You to Kill Me and Wa-Nduuta Found a Job for a Girl, or it may be the result of a social or moral obligation, as it is with wa-Nduuta in the follow-up to Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute.

If the debtor does not want to pay his debt, as for example the elder in I Want You to Kill Me, he may break the contract either by using pacific means, running away or negotiating a revision of the pact, or by using force, fighting or setting a trap. The old man chooses the latter; he asks for more and more goods, refuses an eventual revision of the contract of marriage and also ignores the

elders' advice(15). He is so selfish that he believes he has a right to break the traditional norms and to dictate and impose his own personal norms; thus, his refusal to fulfil the obligation is seen by him as legitimate.

On the contrary, in the creditor's view, the debtor's refusal has the effect of doubling the amount of debt due; in other words, by the end of the story the debtor will be forced to pay not only for the past service he received from his creditor (the goods), but also for the damage caused by his refusal (the loss of his prospective wife).

If the debtor refuses to pay his debt, this stage of deterioration may end the narrative. If the author decides to go on, he must introduce a process of improvement. In such cases the privileged form of improvement consists of transforming the fulfilment of the debt into a meritorious sacrifice which deserves reward. Thus, the fulfilment of debt is changed into the opening of a credit.

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(15) "When the old man had been imprisoned, some people spoke like this: 'Let him face the consequences. I begged him not to give back the things the young man had given him and he told me to marry off my own daughter and leave him in charge of his. He who ignores advice ends up in trouble" (I Want You to Kill Me, Appendix 2.1). The elder himself admits that he has been an individualist all his life: "During my youth I thought I was always right. Even not long ago when I was older, I was living like a leader and I was not contradicted by the people of my age-group" (Ibidem).

9.5.3 sacrifice

Whereas the other forms of deterioration are processes that the agent has to undergo against his will, the sacrifice is a voluntary act meant to acquire merit or reward.

The degradation deriving from the sacrifice demands compensation, often protection in the form of a pact.

Let us see how the process of sacrifice works in I Want You to Kill Me and Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute.

The suicide of the girl in I Want You to Kill Me is not an error, as may appear at first, but a sacrifice. The act of sacrifice excludes any form of protection and, in fact, she has no ally to prevent her from committing suicide. We can diagram her sacrifice as follows:

Planning of suicide	---->	Absence of warning	----->	Suicide committed

The narrative does not end with the girl's suicide because, in the author's perspective, her act has inflicted damage on her former fiancé, who has been deprived of the object of his desire and has sworn never to marry.

It is clear that the writer sees the young man's oath as the only "real" sacrifice worth rewarding. In this perspective, the girl's suicide becomes simply a form of

repayment for her fiancé's sacrifice. In fact, only the girl's disappearance would free the young man from his promise and, for this reason, he is the one who will benefit from her sacrifice(16), according to the scheme:

Sacrifice --> (young man's) --> Process of -->
(of the girl Degradation improvement
on her fiancé's
behalf)

Reward --> New contract --> Contract
(marriage) fulfilled

It is not the girl's sacrifice, but that of her fiancé which demands a retribution (a recompense)(17). Hence the author introduces a process of improvement in the form of a new contract, which will repay the male protagonist for the loss of a prospective wife by giving him another one, as the following scheme shows:

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(16) The girl is considered responsible for the young man's oath, as her own words show in her letter: "I implore you to forgive me because of the harm I have done to you...".
Her death will bring about the solution of the initial conflict:
sacrifice of the young man (oath) >
reparation (girl's suicide) >
solution of the conflict (happy ending)

(17) The development of events in Gakaara's narratives is always under men's control. Women are passive characters who do not really influence the development of the events (see, 10.13).

Sacrifice (oath never to marry)	--> Degradation (he is left without a wife)	-->
Process of improvement (retribution)	-->	Reward (he is given a wife)

Let us see how wa-Nduuta's sacrifice is carried out in the follow-up to Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute. Although the narrative ended in a condition of parity, as wa-Nduuta took back his word and was forgiven for his action, he is still morally indebted to Jeneti (and her husband). Thus, the author changes the fulfilment of wa-Nduuta debt into a meritorious sacrifice which opens a credit, deserving reward in the form of a new pact:

Sacrifice (wa-Nduuta rescues Jeneti from the thugs)	--> Degradation (wa-Nduuta risks his life)	-->
Process of improvement (retribution)	--> Reward (job contract: wa-Nduuta becomes Jeneti's chauffeur)	

9.5.4 punishment

Any damage inflicted on an agent may become, in the avenger's view, a misdeed that calls for punishment.

Just as in the case of the elimination of the opponent, negotiation is the privileged choice offered to Gakaara's characters to avoid punishment for damage inflicted.

In order to cancel the condition "misdeed to be punished", it is necessary for one of the three roles defining the situation - that is to say, the guilty person, the avenger, the victim - to change function.

9.5.5 forgiveness

The guilty person may be released by forgiveness, which retroactively changes the damage inflicted into a service obtained and which demands a proportional service to be given as compensation.

If on the one hand negotiation is the privileged choice which Gakaara's guilty characters are offered to avoid their being punished for a damage inflicted, on the other hand, their victims are always supposed to show forgiveness towards them(18) .

Let us see how the process of forgiveness works in the case of the elder and his prospective son-in-law in I Want You to Kill Me:

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(18) The author stresses the importance, or rather the duty, to forgive the offender, basing his prescription on Christian values.

Although negotiation is a very deeply rooted concept in Gikuyu culture, it does not seem that the concept of forgiveness is equally accepted, as there are no proverbs on the subject, with the exclusion of Gukiriria kwagira kieha, "Indulgence Brings Regret", which seems to warn against tolerance.

Elder's misdeed --> Damage inflicted -->
(refusal to give his elder daughter in marriage) on the young man (he swears never to marry)

Situation --> Negotiation --> Transformation -->
"misdeed to be punished" (forgiveness from the young man) of the damage inflicted into service received

Proportional service given in exchange (the elder gives his younger daughter free of dowry) = Invalidation of the situation "misdeed to be punished"

9.6 Process of Punishment in Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute

From the perspective of the agent who caused damage, the avenger is seen as an aggressor. Hence to avoid punishment he can choose between three possibilities: he may escape, fight or negotiate.

We can see how wa-Nduuta, at first tries to escape and fight and then is forced to accept negotiation:

9.6.1 wa-Nduuta's attempt to escape

The guilty person may be released by escape when he tries to eliminate any spatial link between him and his victim:

Wa-Nduuta's insult	-->	Situation "misdeed to be punished"	-->	first avenger (the police)	-->
Wa-Nduuta tries to escape	-->	Wa-Nduuta fails to escape	-->	situation "misdeed to be punished" re-established	

9.6.2 wa-Nduuta's attempt to fight

The guilty person may be released by deception, when he pretends to be innocent or tries to accuse somebody else of his misdeed:

situation "misdeed to be punished"	-->	second avenger (the inspector interrogates wa-Nduuta)	-->		
Wa-Nduuta tries to deceive (he claims he is innocent and accuses Jeneti)	-->	Failure of deception (the inspector does not believe him)	-->	Situation "misdeed to be punished" re-established	

9.6.3 wa-Nduuta's negotiation

Situation "misdeed to be punished"	-->	Third avenger(19) (Jeneti's husband)	-->	
Wa-Nduuta negotiates his misdeed and asks for forgiveness (he admits)	-->	Wa-Nduuta is forgiven	-->	
Wa-Nduuta becomes his victim's debtor	-->	Wa-Nduuta's sacrifice	=	Elimination of the situation "misdeed to be punished"

Wa-Nduuta will pay his debt in the follow-up to Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute, according to the scheme already proposed. With the protagonist's reparation the narrative cycle is thus complete, but it remains potentially open to new degradations, which will demand new reparations, according to a cycle which may repeat itself ad infinitum.

The alternation of the process of degradation and improvement is at the basis of the wa-Nduuta saga, where these simple sequences are combined in complex sequences, which may be identified, according to each case, "the contract", "the trap", "the misdeed" and so on.

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(19) We shall see the reason why only the third avenger, Jeneti's husband, succeeds in carrying out the negotiation in the study of women characters in 10.13.

10. STORY AND DISCOURSE

10.1 Narrative Movement

The study of the narrative movement in Gakaara's stories reveals an alternation between dramatic scenes, in the form of dialogues, and pauses, which have a function of connection or waiting, whereas summaries and ellipses are very rare(1). In spite of the length of pauses, the narratives are centered on the verbal intercourse of the characters who act upon one another and discover themselves through the force of language.

10.2 Direct Speech

From an approximate calculation of the space taken up by direct speech in the economy of the whole narrative, we can come to the conclusion that speech acts make up the greater part of Gakaara's narratives. This is probably due to the fact that the author is less concerned with actions

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(1) We shall follow the distinction made by Gérard Genette (Figures III, Paris, Seuil 1972) who singles out four forms of narrative movement:

- summary: narration in a few paragraphs or pages of days, months, or years;
- pause: descriptive passage;
- ellipsis: elicitation of a period of time, which can be definite or indefinite;
- scene: dramatic passages, usually dialogues, of crucial importance in the narrative movement.

in themselves than with how an individual character responds to actions or produces them. Thus, direct speech is made the chief instrument for revealing the varied relations of the characters to the actions in which they are implicated.

We have already noted that Gakaara does not make extensive use of direct speech in his first narrative(2). Although direct speech has already a central role in I Want You to Kill Me, since the core of the narration is the police inspector's long speech, it is not dramatically convincing.

In his later works Gakaara shows great confidence in dialogue as a medium of expression(3) probably because he considers it to be the form that his readers can most easily understand and enjoy.

10.3 Reported Speech

Summary of speech, rather than actual quotation of it, is also fairly common in Gakaara's narratives.

The author resorts to reported speech to create rapid movement at a particular point in the narration, as for instance in Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute(4) when the police arrive to arrest wa-Nduuta:

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(2) See 8.1.

(3) Gakaara himself prefers direct speech to reported speech when talking (cf. Interview, Appendix 1).

(4) Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute, Appendix 2.5.

"Some friends of Wa-Nduuta's tried to tell him that the police had come for him, but before he could run away the police arrested him".

More frequently, Gakaara uses reported speech to avoid excessive repetition:

"Wa-Nduuta asked her what had happened and she told him everything".

There are also a few instances in which the author prefers not to report the exact words of a character for reasons of decency. This is the case of the verbal exchange between Mwitumi and Jeneti's husband in Wa-Nduuta Found a Job for a Girl(5). Mwitumi does not want to go to bed with Jeneti's husband., but at the same time she does not want to make him angry, thus she tells him that she does not "feel well". At this point Gakaara cuts the dialogue short,

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(5) The plot can be summarized as follows: wa-Nduuta, Jeneti's chauffeur, has driven his employer to her office. He is washing the car when a girl called Mwitumi approaches him and asks for Jeneti's office. Jeneti is looking for a secretary and she wants to apply. Wa-Nduuta gives her some advice and tells her he is the woman's chaffeur. Mwitumi talks to Jeneti and understands that the woman is looking for an "experienced secretary", whereas she has no previous experience.

When Mwitumi tells her mother that she met Jeneti's chauffeur, the woman immediately thinks that he can help her daughter to get the job and invites wa-Nduuta to her place. They drink and then go to bed together. The man is so fond of her that he promises to help her daughter. He knows that Jeneti is "uncorruptible", so he prefers to explain the problem to Jeneti's husband, hoping he will talk to his wife.

Jeneti's husband offers to find another job for the girl, thinking that she will agree to go to bed with him. He finds her a job, but Mwitumi refuses to have sex with him. In the end she will understand that she cannot have the job without complying with the man's wishes.

and simply says that the two have "a small argument about not feeling well", without going into detail.

A similar function is carried out, in the same narrative, by the ellipsis at the point where wa-Nduuta and Nyamigathi spend the night together:

> "Wa-Nduuta and Nyamigathi, after taking a few more drinks and getting to know each other better, went to bed, happy because they had come to a decision [to talk to Jeneti's husband]".
> The following morning they woke up and departed to their places of work (...)".

10.4 Third-person Narration

Gakaara's intent to give each narrative marked thematic direction as well as moral-psychological depth with minimal authorial intrusion, explains his restricted use of third-person narration.

The author resorts to summaries only when some kind of explanation of past events is strictly needed, otherwise third-person narration is limited to short pauses centred on the salient verbal intercourses. In regard to the proportions of the narrative, third-person narration is frequently only a bridge between much larger units of direct speech.

In Gakaara's narratives the primacy of dialogue is so pronounced that many pieces of third-person narration prove on inspection to be dialogue-bound(6), that is to

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(6) Dialogue-bound narration is the expression used by .../

say they have the function of verbally mirroring, confirming, subverting or focusing statements made in direct discourse by the characters. The repetition has the effect of giving weight or emphasis to the specific terms which the speaker uses for his speech. One can find cases in which there is no divergence between a statement as it occurs in narration and as it recurs in dialogue or vice-versa, but more frequently dialogue-bound narration sets up a small but significant dissonance between the objective report and the terms in which the characters restate the facts, as in the case of the following passage from Wa-Nduuta Found a Job for a Girl:

> "At Kawangware bus stop, wa-Nduuta could not recognize Nyamigathi at first because of the expensive dress she was wearing. He was looking for her, when she went up to him and asked him: 'Why do you look lost, man?'
>
> Wa-Nduuta stared at her and laughed. Then he answered her: 'Hey! I wouldn't have recognized you. You look so different'.
>
> Myamigathi laughed too and told him: 'It is because you saw me in my working overalls'.
>
> 'Hey! You really look like a young girl!'
>
> 'Stop joking!' Nyamigathi told him, 'Hey! You can see how my cheeks have sunk and you still call me a young girl! Come, let's go home'".

Both the piece of third-person narration and the dialogue above convey the same information (Nyamigathi looks so different without her working clothes that wa-Nduuta cannot recognize her), but direct speech adds something about the relationship between the characters

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Robert Alter in The Art of the Biblical Narrative (London, Allen & Unwin 1981) to describe the function of third-person narration in the Bible. On Gakaara and the Bible, see 7.2, 7.5 and 10.20.

that we would not infer from the authorial report. From the very beginning Nyamigathi is very confident and wa-Nduuta seems to be fascinated by her. This first exchange is particularly revealing because we know that Nyamigathi is going to seduce wa-Nduuta so that he agrees to help her (later on wa-Nduuta will admit that the woman "won him over").

10.5 Presentation of Thought

Another way of showing a character's point of view is by portraying his inner life. The presentation of thought becomes a form of suspended action or even a form of suspended interaction between characters.

The categories available to the writer in presenting the thoughts of his characters are the same as those for the presentation of speech. Although in Me and Nyarwimbo Gakaara uses direct thought to show Waigwa's point of view(7), in the other narratives he prefers to report his characters' reflections through narrated reports of thought introduced by "he thought", "he seemed" etc.

Usually(8), when an author chooses to represent the thoughts of a character in whatever form, we are invited

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(7) Me and Nyarwimbo, Appendix 2.2.

(8) The following paragraph is a summary of the concepts expressed by Leech and Short in Style in Fiction, London, Longman 1981, pp. 318-351.
It is worth noting that the authors do not take into consideration any exception to what they regard as the normal function of thought presentation, but we should not forget that the book, as the subtitle indicates, is "a

.../

to see things from that character's point of view and he becomes the reflector of the fiction. The writer can control the reader's sympathy for a certain character by giving us extensive accounts of his thoughts through indirect thought and he can distance the other characters from us by virtue of the fact that we are never shown inside their minds. We only learn about them through their conversations and direct narrative statements. Those characters who are in an intermediate position can be accorded some free indirect speech at the beginning and later it can be removed from them if they do not behave properly.

The function of the presentation of thought in Gakaara's narratives is very different from that expressed above.

The primacy of dialogue is so pronounced that even the characters' thoughts reflect (and reinforce) their words and acts. Let us see an example from Wa-Nduuta Found a Job for a Girl:

> "When Jeneti's husband saw wa-Nduuta, he thought that his wife had sent him, so he asked him: "Did the mother of Kigotho send you?"

Even when the characters' reflections are not verbatim reports of their speech, they only confirm what the characters have already expressed, or they are going to express, in their speech:

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linguistic introduction to English fictional prose" (my emphasis).

> "(...) Wa-Nduuta sat in the car and began to think how he could arrange to meet Jeneti's husband.
>
> He thought and thought because he did not know how to approach that man and tell him about the secret plan concerning his wife.
>
> A few times he even thought of leaving the matter alone, and going in the evening to Nyamigathi to tell her that Jeneti's husband had refused to talk to his wife.
>
> But then he thought that it would be cowardly and dishonest to do that. At the same time he wanted to keep his new friendship with Nyamigathi and he knew that if he did not fulfill his promise, he would lose that relationship.
>
> He suddenly decided that he would go and see Jeneti's husband that very minute".

The fact that wa-Nduuta did not know how to approach Jeneti's husband was already clear from the words he had chosen to answer Nyamigathi and Ruthanju's request:

> "(...) I think we can try to approach him [Jeneti's husband] instead. As he is a man like me, I'll try to talk to him and see whether he can talk to his wife" (my emphasis).

Even the fact that he did not want to lose Nyamigathi's "friendship" was already understood, because the very reason why he had gone to her place was that he "wanted the woman", as he will frankly tell Jeneti's husband.

The characters' reflections do not add anything to their characterization because their inner motivations do not really matter in Gakaara's narratives: only their speech and acts do (9).

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(9) Propp shares with Aristotle the view that in the narrative text-type, the basis is not established by the actors, but by their actions. The actors are the variables, whereas their actions are the invariants or constants (cf. The Morphology of the Folktale, Bloomington, Indiana University Press 1958).

There is no contradiction between the characters' thoughts and speech, just as there is no contradiction between their speech and acts. Words are very powerful in Gakaara's narratives and to say (and even think) something means actually doing it. Wa-Nduuta, for instance, discovers that the moment he helped Mwitumi **verbally** by giving her some advice, he must **practically** help her to get the job. And Mwitumi understands at her own expenses that she cannot simply thank Jeneti's husband with **words**, she must thank him with her **body**.

Gakaara does not give an insight into a particular character so that the reader may sympathize with him; on the contrary, the thoughts of extremely positive characters, like the elder in Me and Nyarwimbo are not portrayed. It seems that Gakaara tends to show the thoughts of confused characters who do not know exactly what to say or do, whereas those characters who abide by Gikuyu customs or Christian religion are only characterized by their clear and straightforward speech.

In some instances the characters' reflections have the function of summaries, that is to say that of relating an earlier event. Waigwa's long self-address in Me and Nyarwimbo, for instance, is not meant to make the reader sympathize with the character, but it is simply a way of giving the reader the information he needs to fully understand the events depicted in the narrative.

10.6 Speech Acts

In a mode of narration so dominated by speech, visual elements are necessarily sparsely represented. And even when a character or place is conceived visually, the writer may contrive to report what is seen through what is spoken.

Gakaara does not give many details about his characters' physical appearance or personal qualities and their motives and characters are inferred from outward behaviour and mostly from speech.

A general principle used for differentiating characters in dialogue is contrast. The author not only (and not always) individualizes his characters by indicating their linguistic peculiarities, but he also has recourse to contrastive dialogue, so that the distinctive features of a character's use of language become more evident because they are juxtaposed with those of another character. This technique is all the more feasible because, with a few rather marginal exceptions, Gakaara limits scenes to two characters at a time.

The most common device of contrastive dialogue is to juxtapose some form of very brief statement with some form of verbosity, as it is the case, for instance, with the girl who commits suicide and her father in I Want You to Kill Me.

In Me and Nyarwimbo, the long and detailed analysis of the problem made by the elder is contrasted with the short and simplistic advice given by the conductor and the policeman to James and Waigwa.

It is interesting to notice that Gakaara seems to attach significance to prolixity as opposed to brevity. If the former is related to kihooto, a "good argument", and ensures the solution of conflicts, the latter is associated with (verbal) violence and is a clear sign of the character's refusal to cooperate (verbally) with the other characters, as in the two examples mentioned above.

10.7 Silence and Speech

In a universe dominated by "the power of the word" silence as opposed to speech seems to carry a negative connotation.

There are cases in which a character hardly speaks at all only to find out later that he just cannot avoid speech. This is the case with Mwitumi in Wa-Nduuta Found a Job for a Girl. When Jeneti's husband tells her more or less openly that he wants to go to bed with her, she does not say anything in spite of his reminding her that "it is not wise to keep silent". Mwitumi's reluctance to face the man is also underlined by the fact that she looks "sideways at him" and prefers to talk to him when there is a door to draw a spatial demarcation between them. After the man's proposal, she keeps silent, stands up, and only when she reaches the door does she speak again to him to say goodbye. When she thinks that she has got the job, she thanks Jeneti's husband "while holding on to the [car] door". Later on she will understand that she must face the man if she wants to get the job and, in fact, only after speaking to him on the phone (a medium which allows to

talk from a distance) and clarifying the situation, can she go to work the following morning with "a clear conscience" and the narrative may end.

On other occasions the author cuts off one speaker in a dialogue without comment, leaving us to ponder the reasons for the interrupted exchange, as it is with Waigwa in Me and Nyarwimbo. He wants to take his sister home, but the elder proposes another solution to the conflict, which is happily accepted by everybody but Waigwa. He has no "good argument" to oppose the elder's judgement and Waigwa's silence is in itself significant of his defeat.

10.8 "Proper Talk" and Social Transgression in Speech

Every speech act has its conditions of appropriacy, or felicity conditions(10), which change from one society or time to the other. To appreciate and understand the force of Gakaara's dialogues and their importance for the development of the plot, we have to adjust to the norms of Gikuyu culture, where it is extremely important to address people in a "proper" way, that is to say, according to their age and social status. In fact, besides a "model of reality", a participant in a discourse also constructs a "model of context", which includes his conception of his relation to his interlocutor. The way in which a character addresses or designates another is particularly revealing in Gikuyu traditional society, where distinctions of

(10) This is the term used by Leech and Short, op. cit., p. 293.

social status are more explicitly graded in speech than they are today. Gakaara's characters always show a consciousness of the social implication of address and of social transgression in speech.

Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute is based on a social transgression in speech on wa-Nduuta's part. He calls the respectful wife of "a big man in the government" a "prostitute" and the narrative can only end when the social status of Jeneti has been restored(11).

An analysis of speech acts in Gakaara's narratives, not only shows the importance of "proper" address, but also of "proper" verbal exchange, as only a "good argument" can solve a conflict.

10.9 Lack of Effective Verbal Communication

When people converse with one another they acknowleage a kind of tacit agreement to cooperate conversationally towards mutual ends. If someone abides by the cooperative principle, they agree to act according to various rules, or conversational maxims(12):

- the maxim of quantity: give the required information, not too much, or too little

(11) See 9.4.

(12) I follow the distinction made by Grice, as quoted by Leech and Short, op. cit., p. 295.

- the maxim of quality: do not say that for which you lack evidence or which you believe to be false

- the maxim of relation: make your contributions relevant to the purpose in hand

- the maxim of manner: avoid obscurity, ambiguity and unnecessary prolixity, and be orderly.

Gakaara's characters often do not abide by the cooperative principle and break one or more conversational maxims at a time, thus creating misunderstandings which prove to be crucial to the development of the plot.

The commonest misunderstandings are created by the contrapositions question/question and assertion/assertion (or exclamation/exclamation). A character asks a question, but instead of answering as required, the other replies in his turn by asking questions, or a character makes an assertion which does not elicit an appropriate contribution from his interlocutor, who, in his turn, makes another firm assertion, thus denying the premise of the conversational cooperative principle. In both cases the contrappositions question/question and exclamation/exclamation (or assertion/assertion) provoke a lack of communication and hence of understanding between the characters.

In I Want You to Kill Me the girl commits suicide, due to a lack of verbal communication with her father. She goes to him to explain her reasons for committing suicide, but their exchange is far from being a dialogue:

girl's assertion ("I say goodbye to you!") > father's assertion(13)("wherever you go I'll bring you back!") = lack of communication > lack of protection against the girl's sacrifice > girl's suicide

The girl breaks the maxim of manner by being too obscure in her speech and her father violates the maxim of relation by answering something that is out of place. Their two speeches end up as two monologues, which cannot elicit the correct response, and subsequent appropriate behaviour.

In a similar way, if we analyse the dialogue between wa-Nduuta and Jeneti, which opens Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute, we see that the two characters do not communicate at all:

Wa-Nduuta's question ("Why don't you let me by, you prostitute?") > Jeneti's question ("Why are you calling somebody you don't know a prostitute?") > Wa-Nduuta's question ("What are you going to do to me for calling you a prostitute?") + Wa-Nduuta's exclamation ("My name is Kiwai wa-Nduuta and I'm afraid of nothing!") > Jeneti's exclamation ("You, you'll see: never again will you call a woman you don't know well a prostitute!") = lack of communication > Jeneti calls the police

Both wa-Nduuta and Jeneti do not abide by the cooperative principle and break several conversational maxims. The former violates the maxim of quality (he lacks evidence for calling Jeneti a prostitute) and that of quantity (by not answering Jeneti's question), whereas the latter breaks the maxim of relation (she could have said she was the wife of a "big man" and that would have been

(13) The father's words are presented in indirect speech in the text.

enough for wa-Nduuta to take his word back), and that of manner (she does not tell him openly that she is going to call the police).

The misunderstandings created by a lack of communication between the characters can only be cleared up by the intervention of an ally who re-establishes, through a "good argument", the conditions for a proper verbal exchange(14). Thus, for example, the incomunicability between wa-Nduuta and Jeneti is overcome at the end of the narrative by the intervention of Jeneti's husband, and at last, the two parties are able to communicate properly, following the rule question/answer:

> Wa-Nduuta's question ("I beg you to forgive me") > Jeneti's answer ("I forgive you") = successful communication > appeasement of conflict

The fact that the two characters are now able to cooperate conversationally implies that the gap between them has been bridged. It is worth noticing that this "closeness" is marked by a physical contact, as at the end of the narrative "Wa-Nduuta came closer to Jeneti" and "she took his hand".

The initial misunderstanding does not always degenerate into conflict and we can talk of false starts. Let us see how the lack of verbal communication between

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(14) This is not the case with the girl and her father in I Want You to Kill Me, but we have already seen in this study that the girl's disappearance is functional to the restoration of the condition for a proper communication between the elder and the girl's former fiancé.

two characters is soon overcome in Wa-Nduuta Found a Job for a Girl.

At the beginning of the narrative Mwitumi asks wa-Nduuta a direct question and the man, instead of giving the expected answer, asks her two unexpected questions, thus breaking the maxim of quantity:

> Mwitumi's question ("Would you please direct me to the offices of the housing company?") > wa-Nduuta's question ("Do you want to see somebody or are you looking for a job?") > Mwitumi's (reluctant) answer ("I want to apply for the vacancy") > Wa-Nduuta's question ("Are you really an expert typist?") = lack of communication > Mwitumi repeats her question ("If you show me that office, I go and try my luck")

At first Mwitumi does not understand why the man asks her questions "as if he was the employer" and asks again the same question (where the office is), but as soon as wa-Nduuta explains to her that he is the chaffeur of the woman who is looking for a secretary, she totally changes her attitude towards him ("she was happy to know what was expected of her"). In fact, after meeting Jeneti, Mwitumi goes straight to wa-Nduuta and when he asks "what happened", she tells him "everything" without any hesitation.

At this point wa-Nduuta breaks again the maxim of quantity by not giving the appropriate answer:

> Mwitumi's question: "They will test our typing skills, won't they?"
>
> Wa-Nduuta's answer: "They will test your skills in dealing with all office matters, such as keeping office secrets, public relations, tidiness of the office and many other things. Those who have already been

interviewed were very much afraid of the lady's questions".

Wa-Nduuta gives more details than he is requested, but now the perspective has changed completely. Mwitumi does not see the man's questions and remarks as an intrusion into her privacy, but as precious advice. Wa-Nduuta's breaking of the maxim of quantity does not show his refusal to cooperate conversationally, but, on the contrary, it displays his will to cooperate with the girl.

Although the initial lack of communication proves to be only a false start, its function in the narrative movement is not dissimilar from that of a real lack of communication. Wa-Nduuta's talk, or rather overtalk, creates a problem that must be overcome by the end of the narrative, as he will find himself in the difficult position of helping the girl not only "verbally", but practically. The solution to the problem, which will require the intervention of "experienced" allies, constitutes the content of the narrative.

10.10 "Deviant" Speech and Characters

The grammar and lexis of Gakaara's dialogues are of the very simple kind that might be expected in real situations. The author shows a keen ear for the rhythm of conversation and reports initiating signals, such as atiriri, "listen", hi, "hey" or kai,"oh", which add little to the message, but give the flavour of real conversation.

Since the writing system is in many respects a system for representing the sound pattern of speech, a further source of phonological effects is graphology, particularly in the evocation of a character's style of speech in dialogue. The author extends such mimicry to the use of unorthodox spelling and to non-standard forms of language in the evocation of the character of Ole Mulai in If You Become a Christian...We'll Get Married.

Non-standard language is typically associated with objects of comedy and satire, that is to say with characters whom we see from the outside only. The effect is one of distancing, as the very fact of using such forms implies that the character deviates from the norm of the writer's own standard of language and hence it creates a sense of remoteness from his world and the world of his readers.

Ole Mulai is a Maasai and therefore he is depicted as an outsider, not only in the way he speaks, but also in his dress and outlook, and we can feel the author's ironical distancing in describing him.

Gakaara usually individualizes his characters with a few traits, but in the case of Ole Mulai he gives us a detailed description of his physical appearance. If on the one hand the author believes that what is known does not need to be described, on the other hand he feels that a detailed description is needed to depict what is "alien" to Gikuyu people. Thus Ole Mulai's "funny" appearance is fully described and this is also functional in underlining the character's change, both external and interior, as the narrative proceeds to the end. It is worth noticing that

Ole Mulai's characteristics, that is to say the red ochre on his clothes, hair and body, the gap between his front teeth due to their removal at initiation, and his long hair worn in a pigtail, are not alien to Gikuyu people as they were also characteristic of the Gikuyu of old. Although the author is aware of it, he does not acknowledge it, as he wants to convey the idea that the Gikuyu can only be identified with the "modern" and "civilized", in other words, westernized people, the "spearhead of the nation"(15).

The Gikuyu girl, Wambui, is educated and "a good Christian". She is theru, "clean", and wears a white handkerchief on her head, whereas the red ochre on Ole Mulai's body and clothes and the long staff he carries (apart from the obvious sexual symbolism) give the idea of a kind of devil with his pitchfork. But in spite of his "devilish" appearance, he is more similar to a "bon sauvage", as harmless as a child, and he only needs to be "enlightened" by Jesus through the Gikuyu girl, who is seen as a kind of "angel of the Lord" (she is gathirange, "a virgin" and theru, "clean"). The author wants to underline that a Gikuyu, who is a good Christian, should

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(15) The idea that the Gikuyu are the spearhead of the nation remains implicit in all Gakaara's writings, whether fictional or not. In some cases the author openly insists on it, as in his narratives Nyakinyua the Political Activist and If You Become a Christian...We'll Get Married, and especially in his "didactic" articles. For instance in "How to Run a Business", which opens the booklet of Atiriri Series No.2 entitled Ndugeta Ungi Maraya (Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute), we read: "Make your business progress in step with your country's progress" (p. 5).

"love his or her neighbours", even in the broader sense of a neighbouring ethnic group(16). The author seems to suggest that since the Gikuyu are the spearhead of the nation, they should help the other ethnic groups, which are still backward, to "rise to their level".

Gakaara's attitude towards Ole Mulai, and the Maasai in general, is not dissimilar to the missionaries' attitude towards black people. The difference lies in the fact that the author discriminates between the Maasai and the Gikuyu, who are "properly" dressed, converted to the "proper" religion, whereas the Maasai are "backward". He also proudly underlines the fact that a Gikuyu, Jomo Kenyatta, is the president of the nation(17).

At the end of the narrative Ole Mulai is no longer a "funny" and "wild" Maasai because he has been christianized and civilized by the "merciful" and "pure" Gikuyu girl, Wambui. When the Maasai is on the way to being converted she no longer "fears his contact" and later on when he has been "accepted by Jesus", she even "tries to embrace him" as the (religious) distance between

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(16) Gakaara's view is far from being broad-minded, as most of the Gikuyu consider the Maasai as "brothers". They also used to intermarry (cf. Make an Attempt in Order to Succeed, English translation contained in Appendix 4 of Gakaara's prison diary, op. cit., p. 240). It would have been totally different if the author had chosen another ethnic group, as his audience would not have (easily) accepted the idea of a Gikuyu woman marrying, for instance, a Luo.

(17) "That day Ole Mulai had gone to Mau Narok with a friend to take a bus to go to Nairobi and see Kenyatta, as they had heard about his fame" (If You Become a Christian... We'll Get Married, Appendix 2.3).

the two has been bridged and Ole Mulai is no longer an outsider.

The Christian religion is seen by Gakaara as a synonym for education. The two are so strictly connected that Ole Mulai "learns the catechism and to read and write".

Christianity is associated with "cleanliness" of the soul and the body and Ole Mulai, who was "red with ochre" (or giko, "dirty", as he is also referred to) will finally wear nguo theru, "clean clothes" and marry a pure girl in a uhiki mutheru "clean marriage" because "the blood of Jesus has washed him completely", as the verse of the song Damu ya Yesu husafisha kabisa ("The Blood of Jesus Cleanses Completely") had anticipated(18).

10.11 Descriptive Focus

In Gakaara's narratives there are no descriptions of the natural environment of Gikuyuland. The author probably feels that as his readers are already familiar with them, they would feel such descriptions redundant. Thus he deliberately concentrates on the action in his stories, omitting those details which are not functional to the narrative movement.

It is very interesting to notice how the author reinforces the foregrounding by omitting details, instead

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(18) Ibidem. The function of the song in the narrative is similar to that of songs in traditional folktales, where songs often carry the meaning of the stories.

of including them. This is an uncommon device in Western fiction where a description of a well-known landscape, for example, contributes to the illusion that the reader is witnessing an actual piece of reality.

Verisimilitude and credibility rely heavily on descriptions which give the reader the sense of knowing places, people, occasions and so on. On the contrary, in Gakaara's narratives the simple specifications of place or time of day seem to carry enough "meaning" in themselves, so that they do not need any further explanation or description. Thus the author uses short statements such as "here in Gikuyuland"(19), "there in Karatina"(20), "in this part of the country"(21), or "at Karatina bus station the last Sunday of the month"(22), relying on the potentials of the common "Gikuyu background" he shares with his readers. This enables them to build up an exact picture of the place he is not actually describing.

If on the one hand there are no descriptions as such, on the other hand we can find many details regarding the time of day or the exact distance in miles from one town to another. The author feels that these are the kind of details which give a sense of verisimilitude and credibility to his narrative. Moreover, these details may

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(19) I Want You to Kill Me, Appendix 2.1.

(20) Me and Nyarwimbo, Appendix 2.2.

(21) Nyakinyua Muteti (Nyakinyua the Political Activist), p. 2. The booklet has been translated into English by Patrick R. Bennett, op. cit., pp. 45-56.

(22) Me and Nyarwimbo, Appendix 2.2.

be seen also as another expression of Gakaara's didacticism, as he probably thinks that his readers may find it useful to know what telephone number they must dial to call the police(23), or how long it takes to go by bus from a place to another. In fact, travelling has become a common feature in the life of the Gikuyu (and criminality as well!), as many people leave their families at home in the countryside to go to work in town and travel back home when they get their salaries at the end of the month to spend the weekend there.

10.12 Presentation of Characters

Ole Mulai is the only character whose physical appearance is described in detail, as Gakaara probably feels that his readers do not need a physical description of a Gikuyu, just as they do not need a description of the natural environment or towns in Gikuyuland(24).

Gakaara individualizes his characters with a few traits which are always relevant and functional to the narrative movement. His descriptions of characters are based on the assumption that he is not only omniscient on matters of "fact", but all-seeing in matters of judgement and his readers should thus accept his word.

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(23) Cf. e.g. "Jeneti went to a nearby coffee shop and dialled '999' for the police", Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute, Appendix 2.5.

(24) In his study The Morphology of the Folktale, Vladimir Propp writes that it is a common feature of the folktale to describe characters according to their functions only (hero, antagonist and so on).

Let us analyse, as an example, how the author introduces the characters in Me and Nyarwimbo.

Nyarwimbo:

"She was a fat young woman and she was not very tall. She was decked out in fashionable clothes and, from her way of talking, she seemed a bit conceited".

Nyarwimbo's accessories:

"A big leather suitcase, a basket full of clothes and a decorated bag full of books and other little things... a handbag, which looked very expensive"

Gathoni:

"Gathoni was not wearing very fashionable clothes, but she looked the same age as her friend. Her face was jovial".

James:

"A young man dressed in a very expensive black suit and with a radio in his hand".
He works "as a clerk at the Ministry of Works in Nairobi".

James's accessories:

He has "a radio in his hand".

The conductor:

He is simply "the conductor".

The driver:

He is simply "the driver".

Ndatheru:

"A young man whose job was selling cheap goods(...) He was from the girl's village"; "He was very talkative".
He "was a friend of Waigwa's, Nyarwimbo's brother, although Waigwa was a bit older".

Ndatheru as seen by Gathoni:

"His mind has been spoiled by his small business of selling cheap goods, shouting all the time. He would sell things even to his own mother!
He doesn't remember to go home and sleeps there, in the market-place".

The policeman:

He is simply "the policeman".

Policeman's accessories:

"A notebook for writing fines".

Waigwa:

No physical description, but his age is given long before he appears in the story ("Ndatheru was the same age as James" and we are told that James "was a friend of Waigwa's although Waigwa was a bit older").

The elder:

"[His] hair was almost grey".
He had worked as a tribal policeman for ten years", then "he had been an elder of the council for six years".
He speaks "in a loud voice [which] showed great authority and complete confidence".

The author's judgement of a character is always clearly stated, so that he can direct his readers' value responses to the characters and events in the narrative.

We can distinguish different scales or spheres of value in the description of a character. There is a sphere of good or bad disposition (Nyarwimbo is "conceited"), a sphere of positive or negative emotional attitude (Gathoni is "jovial"), a social scale of accepted behaviour (Ndatheru is "talkative") and of standing in the community (the elder has been a "tribal policeman" and an "elder of the council").

If Gakaara introduces a character in a certain way, using certain kinds of adjectives, nouns and verbs, there is no doubt that his estimation will be fulfilled in later events in the narrative.

The fact that Ndatheru is "talkative", for example, will prove to be essential in the narrative movement, as

he will tell Waigwa that he has seen Nyarwimbo in the bus for Nairobi. Similarly, the elder is presented in such a way that the reader imagines that he will be able to "judge the case" and solve the initial conflict.

The objects that the characters carry with them have the function of underlining their social status(25). Thus Nyarwimbo's luggage reveals that she is well-off and educated (her bag is "full of books") and James's radio shows that he is well-off too. In fact, we will learn later on in the story that he works as "a clerk at the Ministry of Works in Nairobi". Similarly, the fact that Ndatheru sells "cheap goods" in the market "shouting all day long" explains his "free" talk and careless way of addressing people. Hence his greeting the two girls in a familiar way when he should not have done so, as they only "came from the same village".

We learn almost nothing about the characters' physical appearance, but a great deal about their character, attitude and standing in the world. Only in the case of women are physical appearances described, whereas with men the author seems to think that their physical description would not add anything important. In fact, from the characters' sketches above we can see very clearly which are the aspects that Gakaara believes to be relevant in the description of characters: social status (including profession) and age, in so much as social

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(25) On the character of the policeman, see 10.14.

relations, especially in Gikuyu traditional society, rely heavily on them.

Thus, although we do not know Waigwa's actual age, we are given the most important piece of information, "Waigwa was a bit older than James". This detail has a particular significance in Gakaara's fictional world where the relationships between the various characters are based on a strict social code with precise rules of behaviour according to age.

Waigwa is supposed to act like a mature man because he is older than James and Nyarwimbo, but actually he behaves and talks like a child, as even the conductor notices ("Hey! I thought you were a grown-up worthy of respect and now you yourself show you're nothing!"). Waigwa does not listen to anybody and tries to impose his own views; in other words he uses physical and verbal violence, instead of "a good argument" to solve the conflict(26). He breaks the norms of "proper" behaviour by stopping the bus, and the norms of "proper" talk by constantly interrupting his interlocutors and by not greeting his sister and James, as Nyarwimbo points out ("Why don't you greet people first?"). Furthermore, he arrogates to himself the right to act for his father whereas he is not allowed to do so ("Although you are my brother, you can't meddle with things that have nothing to do with you as long as father is still alive").

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(26) The moral of the narrative is stressed by the final Gikuyu proverb "A Strong Argument Breaks a Set Bow". And in fact, in the end, Waigwa's violence ("the set bow") will be defeated by the elder's wisdom.

As we have seen from the example above, the details the author gives us when presenting a character are always functional to the narrative movement, but, more important than direct statements and attribution, are the inferences we draw from the characters' own words, as Gakaara's narratives are mainly made up of dialogues.

10.13 Women Characters

Women are not the real protagonists of Gakaara's narratives(27). Although they are agents endowed with initiative who participate in the action, they do not seem to possess the power to influence the narrative movement. Only men are able to create a conflict and solve it, whereas women are secondary characters who wait for the men to resolve the conflict on their behalf.

In Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute Jeneti suffers an aggression on wa-Nduuta's part when he insults her without any reason. She can choose between three strategies of protection: she can try to cut every link with her aggressor by running away, she can accept the hostile confrontation by fighting him, or she can change her enemy into an ally through negotiation.

Jeneti cannot run away because she has been insulted in public and her eventual flight would be tantamount to

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(27) The only exception is the character of Nyakinyua Muteti "Nyakinyua the Political Activist", but although she is a woman, she is actually the mouthpiece for a man, Jomo Kenyatta (see 5.2). Just as the president was called "the father of the nation", Nyakinyua becomes in the narrative "the mother of the nation".

an admission of guilt. She cannot fight back because, as a woman, she is in a condition of inferiority to the man and she cannot treat him as an equal. She is conscious of her "weakness" as she says, while her "angry tears run like water": "Now, why didn't God make me a man, since merely because I'm a woman, I can be insulted as if I were the lowest of the low? Maybe I'm insulted only because I'm not strong enough to fight him!"(28).

If she had answered wa-Nduuta's insult with another insult (an appropriate answer to wa-Nduuta's exclamation "Let me by, you prostitute!" could have been something like "Let me by, you drunkard!") she would not have been a "respectful" woman according to the author's social code of behaviour. Thus Jeneti can only try to negotiate, but, as we have seen earlier on in our study, she is not able to do so, due to a lack of communication with wa-Nduuta. She has no choice but to call other men (the police) to deal with the man who has insulted her.

It is worth noting that both the onlookers and the police take Jeneti's side not because she is a woman who has been insulted, but because she is "the wife of a big man in the government"(29). It is not the reputation of

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(28) Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute, Appendix 2.5.

(29) "Some of the women and taxi drivers knew that young woman and her husband and for that reason they were ashamed of what wa-Nduuta had told her in front of many people" (Ibidem).

"When the police heard that the young woman was the wife of an important man in the government, they immediately sent an inspector and two constables" (Ibidem).

Jeneti as a woman which is at stake, but the reputation of her husband.

Jeneti's husband accepts in theory the fact that in the "new nation" women are equal to men: "Some people thought that a woman has no right to accuse a man and that quarrels should be judged only by men for men, as in the old days (...) Nowadays men and women are equal in the eyes of law"(30). But in practice his behaviour shows that he abides by the norms of "the old days", as he says later on to wa-Nduuta: "This woman is my wife and she is no prostitute. You insulted her and you insulted me as well. I was not present when you insulted her, but I think that I must settle the case leaving the woman out of it"(31).

Wa-Nduuta comes to regret his mistake not because he has insulted Jeneti, but because he has insulted her husband: "He could not look them in the eyes, especially because a bit earlier he had understood whose wife the woman he had insulted was, and he was ashamed"(32). In the end he says to Jeneti's husband: "I can't argue with you. I must confess I have insulted you greatly"(33).

Jeneti is not a real subject in the narrative, but an object in the hands of men. If at the beginning she is the object of wa-Nduuta's insult, in the end she becomes the object of the negotiation between her husband and

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(30) Ibidem.

(31) Ibidem.

(32) Ibidem, my emphasis.

(33) Ibidem.

wa-Nduuta. Her only action, the calling of the police, is seen both by the onlookers and her husband as a mistake(34) and in fact, it provokes a stage of deterioration in the story. A conflict cannot be solved by women, but only by men, who must "leave women out" if they want their negotiation to be successful,

Nyarwimbo, in Me and Nyarwimbo, shows more initiative than Jeneti, but her words and behaviour do not really influence the events in the narrative. Just as with Jeneti, Nyarwimbo's action (running away from home does not solve the conflict and she ends up by being the object of a negotiation between men. Even the extreme action of the girl who commits suicide in I Want You to Kill Me may be considered ineffective, as it only postpones the final negotiation between the two men.

Wambui, in If You Become a Christian... We'll Get Married, seems not to be an object in the hands of men, as she apparently carries out the final negotiation (her marriage with Ole Mulai) alone. But she actually embodies the extreme case of passivity, as she is only the instrument of Jesus in Ole Mulai's conversion and, once again, the real protagonists of the narrative are two men, Jesus and Ole Mulai, and the solution of the initial conflict (the fact that the young Masaai is a heathen and thus cannot marry the girl), is the result of a

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(34) "She felt in her heart that some people had not approved of her calling the police" (Ibidem). See also what Jeneti's husband tells his wife after listening to her story (Ibidem).

negotiation from which the woman is excluded (Ole Mulai "accepts Jesus" and can marry Wambui).

Whatever women do in Gakaara's narratives, their moves turn out to be non-actions; in other words, their speeches or behaviour can only postpone the final solution of the conflict which is inevitably carried out by men.

10.14 The Policeman

We have seen earlier on in this study that Gakaara's narratives open with the presentation of a conflict and a subsequent stage of deterioration. When the narrative has reached a dead end the police arrive, introducing a new element into the narrative. Thus, in Me and Nyarwimbo, Waigwa would have left the bus if the policeman had not prevented the bus from starting; the girl's letter in I Want You to Kill Me would not have been found and wa-Nduuta in Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute would not have been stopped from running away.

The policeman does not simply let the antagonists talk to each other, as the driver and the conductor in Me and Nyarwimbo(35) or the onlookers in Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute do; the policeman has the authority to ask precise questions which his interlocutors have a duty to answer. Thus, although the antagonists cannot communicate

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(35) The conductor and the driver do not interfere with Waigwa and James's argument, they simply give them the opportunity to talk, as the conductor himself stresses: "We've waited for you to talk to your sister and if you didn't reach an agreement, that's your business." (Me and Nyarwimbo, Appendix 2.2).

directly the one with the other, even in his presence(36), at least each of them separately is able to communicate with him, as for example in Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute:

W-N's speech	vs	J's speech = lack of communication
\/		\/
policeman's questions		policeman's questions
\/		\/
W-N's answers = communication		J's answers = communication

The dialogues with the policeman have three functions:

1. to give further details to the reader in the form of a dialogue without the author resorting to summary (e.g. in Me and Nyarwimbo we are given important pieces of information, such as that about James's job);

2. to give further details to the "internal" audience (e.g. in Me and Nyarwimbo the passengers in the bus did not know about Nyarwimbo's pregnancy, although the reader did, because the omniscient narrator has already displayed Waigwa's thoughts; in I Want You to Kill Me the girl's relatives and friends do not know the content of the girl's letter, whereas the reader already does);

(36) See 10.6.

3. to summarize the events already known by the reader and to give him time to reflect about them before the end of the narrative.

We may say that the arrival of the police helps to clarify the motives behind the conflict, although it does not actually solve it.

It seems that in as much as there was no police force in traditional Gikuyu society, so in modern times their role is not felt to be crucial. A new element must be introduced so that the conflict may be appeased and the narrative end: the elder.

10.15 The Elder

The elder's approach to disputes is totally different from that of the other characters. He does not ask questions like the policeman: he goes straight to the core of the matter. Moreover, he does not let the two parties quarrel in his presence because his unquestionable authority does not demand answers but absolute silence(37).

In only forty lines the elder settles the conflict in Me and Nyarwimbo, due to his knowledge of "Gikuyu

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(37) Even Waigwa, who has been trying to impose his own views on his interlocutors without listening to them, keeps silent when the elder talks and does not say a word, not even at the end of the narrative.

Nyakinyua the Political Activist is a woman, but she is an elder as well (her name Nyakinyua means "married woman whose children have reached marital status"): "She could go on talking for hours and nobody could contradict her" (Nyakinyua Muteti, Nyakinyua the Political Activist, p. 3).

customs", ugikuyu, and to his experience as a "member of the elders' council", muthuri wa kiama, and as "tribal policeman", muthigari wa makanga.

It is interesting to note that the elder has a "double" authority, the one given by tradition, and the one given by modern administration, as tribal policemen are appointed by the government(38).

Jeneti's husband in Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute also possesses the same kind of double authority. He is a lawyer, a "big man in the government", but he also knows how to judge a case "in the Gikuyu way"(39).

It seems that Gakaara's ideal of justice is a mixture of tribal wisdom and knowledge of the "new ways" (including Christian values). Maybe, according to him, traditional wisdom is no longer sufficient to understand the complexity of modern life and the two must support each other to be effective. In the same way this wisdom and the Christian religion are seen as two positive forces operating together side by side.

10.16 The "Supreme" Elder

Not only the elder's wisdom, but also the invisible hand of the Christian God bring the narratives to a good

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(38) Tribal policemen were created by the colonial government but they still exist in independent Kenya and their function is to help the local chiefs.

(39) Jeneti's husband asks wa-Nduuta: "How do you want us to decide the case? Do you want to follow the government procedure or the Gikuyu way?" (Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute, Appendix 2.5).

end. Thus, at the end of Me and Nyarwimbo, Nyarwimbo underlines: "God is good because this case ended well". Similarly in Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute wa-Nduuta's final words are: "God is really merciful because he listened to my prayers!" Even the elder's change of attitude towards James at the end of I Want You to Kill Me seems to derive more from divine intervention than from actual facts. However bad they may be, characters must change for the conflict to be resolved, because all of them are merely instruments in the hands of God who compensates or punishes them according to their good or bad actions.

Divine justice operates in a different way to that of Gikuyu traditional justice. In fact, according to Gikuyu customs, the father of the girl who kills herself in I Want You to Kill Me, is not a creditor to his daughter's former fiancé, as he has given back all the goods he received in payment for the dowry. But his debt has not been paid according to divine justice, which is the Biblical justice of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth". Hence, to "end well" the elder must repent and give "a daughter for a daughter". Maybe Gakaara feels that human justice in the person of the elder can only redress minor errors, whereas the intervention of God is needed to judge the most serious cases, such as the girl's suicide.

In If You Become a Christian... We'll Get Married the initial conflict is not resolved by an elder, but by God Himself through His divine wisdom:

Initial conflict (a "heathen " Maasai man wants to marry a Christian Gikuyu girl) >

God's intervention (changes the heathen into a devoted Christian) =
Conflict appeased (the two Christians can marry)

Possibly the author felt that a delicate issue such as the "conversion of the heathen" could not be dealt with by a "human" elder. Moreover, Ole Mulai is a Maasai and it would have sounded rather odd if he had listened to the "good arguments" of a Gikuyu elder (and in fact no Gikuyu proverbs appear in the narrative, but only quotations from the Bible). That is why a "supreme" elder above all ethnic groups and endowed with "universal" wisdom is called to judge and solve Ole Mulai's case.

10.17 Wa-Nduuta

The serialized adventures of Kiwai wa-Nduuta appear in the forty-two issues of the Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine which have been published so far.

In each story wa-Nduuta acts impulsively and gets into trouble and has to call on all his resources to get out of the difficulty; or, alternatively, it is another character who is in distress and the protagonist tries to help him or her out of trouble. But wa-Nduuta is no hero: he does not possess special qualities and he is often wrong in his judgements and behaviour. He is not always sincere or completely honest, but he is good at heart and ready to help people in difficulty.

Wa-Nduuta is the man of the street, somebody Gakaara's readers can easily identify with. By the author's own admission, "wa-Nduuta does what people

do"(40) and thus all the ambiguities in his character and behaviour exemplify human contradictions, common to any man.

The name itself, Kiwai wa-Nduuta, characterizes the protagonist. Kiwai is a nickname given to people who like talking and telling lies, just as he does. Wa-Nduuta (son of Nduuta) is not a real family name because Nduuta is a female name and the Gikuyu can only be named after their father(41). In fact, in the first story of the series, Ndugeta Ungi Maraya (Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute), when wa-Nduuta is asked his name by the policeman, he says he is called wa-Nduuta in order to hide his real name.

Wa-Nduuta lives in a small village in Gikuyuland but often travels around Gikuyuland and spends long periods in Nairobi(42). His mobility is functional in that it allows the author to tackle both the problems of farmers (loans, co-operatives etc.) and those of the people living in town

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(40) Interview, Appendix 1. Gakaara repeats the same concept in his preface to Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 35 where we read: "Our readers have learned that wa-Nduuta is an ordinary person, who does ordinary things, just like any other person: in town, in the village, in the rural areas and in the fields. The aim of the wa-Nduuta stories has always been to help you or teach you something. So when you read the wa-Nduuta stories be always confident that you will learn something from them" (p. 1).

(41) A popular Gikuyu author, Charles Mangua, called the hero of his best-seller Son of Woman (Nairobi, East African Publishing House 1971, repr. 1972, 1974, 1978, 1982, 1987; Heinemann 1989) and its follow-up Son of Woman in Mombasa (Nairobi, Heinemann 1986; repr. 1989), "Son of Woman" possibly thinking of wa-Nduuta. Unfortunately the author no longer lives in Kenya and I could not contact him.

(42) The first ten issues are set in Nairobi, where wa-Nduuta lived and worked as a chauffeur before moving to the countryside and becoming a farmer.

(corruption, criminality), as well as general everyday problems like lack of money, sex and family relationships.

The wa-Nduuta stories have as their background contemporary events and thus dramatically reflect the growing climate of insecurity in present-day Kenya as perceived by the common man. This is the case, for instance, with the three stories which take place at the time of the attempted military coup in 1982, which describe the real events through the eyes of wa-Nduuta, who happens to find himself in the streets of Nairobi and is unwillingly involved in the violence and looting, just like many passers-by at the time(43).

Gikuyu society, and Kenyan society at large, as mirrored in the wa-Nduuta stories, is not static and neither is the character of wa-Nduuta. At his first appearance he is a drunkard, he has no steady job and no family, but in later episodes he improves his ways and thus his position in society, becoming a successful farmer, with a large family, and a trustworthy elder whose advice is often sought by his neighbours.

Through the wa-Nduuta stories Gakaara seems to suggest to his readers that any man, just like wa-Nduuta, is fallible, but nonetheless he has the power not only to overcome his weaknesses and everyday conflicts, but also

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(43) The adventures of wa-Nduuta at the time of the coup, which appeared in Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine Nos. 28, 29 and 30, have been collected in one volume Wa-Nduuta Hingo ya Paawa (Wa-Nduuta at the Time of the Coup) in 1984. In the interview Gakaara said that his description of the events in Nairobi was so "real" that his readers could not believe he had not witnessed the events himself, see Interview, Appendix 1.

to succeed in life. And succeeding in life means above all to become a useful and respected member of the Gikuyu community.

10.18 The "Internal" Audience

The analysis of Gakaara's narratives reveals the presence of an "internal" audience who witness the events and often participate in the story by making spontaneous remarks.

The passengers in the bus in Me and Nyarwimbo, for instance, "dissent" and "laugh" on hearing Waigwa's childish words. They not only "whisper" while looking at Nyarwimbo, but "speak in loud voices" and ask the elder to judge the case ("Stand up and judge the case, old man! Judge it quickly so that we can go!"); when the elder settles the case, they "clap their hands"(44).

Similarly in Nyakinyua the Political Activist people in the coffee shop break in and ask Nyakinyua a question ("Why don't you tell us what we can be proud of, mother?") and they "applaud" when she sits down after her speech(45).

There is a clear analogy between the passengers and an audience at a theatre who clap their hands when the show is over, but also with the audience who express their approval at the end of an oral performance. In fact,

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(44) Me and Nyarwimbo, Appendix 2.2.

(45) Nyakinyua Muteti (Nyakinyua the Political Activist), p. 12 and p. 15.

members of the audience do not need to confine their participation to silent listening, they are also expected to make verbal contributions, such as spontaneous exclamations, actual questions, echoing the speaker's words and so on.

The possibility of both clarification and challenge from the members of the audience and their effect on the performance is indeed one of the main distinctions between oral and written literary pieces(46). Gakaara tries to bridge this gap by introducing an "internal" audience whose function is to stress the crucial moments in the narration in order to attract and direct the attention and sympathies of the "external" audience, that is to say, his readers.

The "internal" audience act out the emotions that the author wants the "external" audience to feel at a certain point of the narrative. Hence the function of the "internal" audience is also to stress the moral of the story.

10.19 The Bus

The bus features as an important element in Gakaara's stories and is related to the necessity to have an audience inside the story who witness the events.

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(46) Cf. Ruth, Finnegan, Oral Literature in Africa, Oxford, Oxford University Press 1970 (1987), pp. 10-11 and 385.

The occasional passengers, the driver and the conductor are the "best" audience in so much as they do not know the protagonists and thus can be impartial in judging their behaviour. But this is not the only function carried out by the bus.

In Gakaara's stories, just as in real life in Kenya, the bus is a place where people exchange ideas and talk freely. As Gakaara remarked "people who do not know each other, especially men and women, don't have many chances of talking", but they do "talk when they are travelling"(47).

Travelling from the countryside to town and talking to fellow-travellers is a common aspect of Kenyan life, but in Gakaara's works the bus constitutes a microcosm in itself where communication is not only easier, but also more effective.

In If You Become a Christian... We'll Get Married Ole Mulai meets Wambui at the bus stop, but it is only in the bus that he can actually talk to her and make his marriage proposal. Even communication with God seems to be more effective on the bus and Ole Mulai, after his conversion to Christianity on the bus, is spared from the accident.

Similarly, in Me and Nyarwimbo the three parties involved in the quarrel are able to communicate only when they are on the bus. All of them have to board the bus (Nyarwimbo, James and finally Waigwa) in order to have

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(47) Interview, Appendix 1.

successful verbal exchanges and appease the initial conflict.

Once the conflict is solved and the community, represented by the passengers, the driver and the conductor, has shown its approval, the bus ceases to be a kind of court of law suspended in time and space and can set off for its destination.

The journey does not imply a real movement from one place to the other, but a crucial change in the life of the protagonists. Thus, for Ole Mulai, for example, it is a journey from heathenism to Christianity, whereas for Nyarwimbo, who is going to marry her boyfriend in Nairobi, is a journey to adulthood.

10.20 The Bible and Gakaara's Stories(48)

We have already remarked that Gakaara's father used to read the Bible to the family and that Gakaara himself used to read it.

Although in the early fifties he rejected Christian religion, his position has always been somewhat ambivalent and his knowledge of the Bible sound. In fact, he seems at ease in handling both traditional Gikuyu proverbs and quotations from the Bible, especially in If You Become a Christian... We'll Get Married.

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(48) The bulk of this discussion is drawn from the following sources: Alter, Robert, op. cit., Berlin, Adele, Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative, Sheffield, The Almond Press 1983 and Greenwood, David, Structuralism and the Biblical Text, Berlin, Mouton 1985.

In his booklet against "the colonialist's" language and religion, The Danger of the Black European Gakaara makes some references to the Bible (the Ten Commandments, Abraham, etc.). It even seems that he is quoting the Bible when, in his argument against Christian religion, he writes:

> "If you pray to God calling yourself Chege or Njeri, your prayers will be answered just like those of the colonialists who pray to God and call themselves John or Mary"(49)".
>
> "(...) The same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for 'Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved'" (Romans 10:12-13).

Let us now examine the main features of the Bible which are also common to Gakaara's writings and to some of the guidelines in the short story course.

1) PRIMACY OF DIALOGUE

Biblical characters act upon one another, discover themselves, affirm or expose their relation to God through the force of language(50).

The primacy of dialogue is so pronounced that usually third-person narration proves on inspection to be dialogue-bound, verbally mirroring elements of dialogue which precede them or which they introduce.

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(49) The Danger of the Black European, Appendix 2.8.

(50) Cf. Alter, op. cit., p. 76.

We have already remarked that in Gakaara's stories the role of narration is subsidiary to direct speech by the characters and that narration is often relegated to the role of confirming assertions made in dialogue(51).

2) "ESSENTIAL" DESCRIPTIONS

In the biblical narrative there are virtually no "free motifs"(52), that is, details which can be deleted without essentially altering the plot(53). Whatever is reported in the Bible can be assumed to be essential to the story.

Nothing is allowed to enter the scene which will detract attention from the dialogue itself. The biblical scene, in other words, is conceived almost entirely as a verbal exchange, with the assumption that what is significant about a character, at least for a particular narrative moment, can be brought out almost entirely in his or her speech.

The paradigmatic biblical story starts with a few brief statements that name the principal character or characters, locate them geographically, identify significant family relationships, and in some instances provide a succint moral, social, or physical

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(51) See 10.4.

(52) The distinction between "free motifs" and "bound motifs" was first proposed by Boris Tomashevsky, "Thematics" (Russian Formalist Criticism, L. T. Lemon and M. J. Reis eds., Lincoln, Neb., 1965, pp. 66-95).

(53) Cf. Alter, op. cit., p. 79.

characterization of the protagonist. Then the narration moves on to the report of actions occurring in sequence at specific points in time(54), and from that point, it generally moves into the dialogue(55).

In Gakaara's stories and in the Bible, descriptive terms are based on status (wealthy, old), profession, distinctive physical features (beautiful, strong), and nationality(56).

The purpose of character depiction in his works, just as in the Bible, is not to visualize the character, but to enable the reader to situate the character in terms of his place in society and his outstanding traits.

The general function of the initial narration both in the Bible and Gakaara's stories is to convey what can be called expository information. They usually open with a short passage which identifies the protagonist, his or her family status, and which locates the story. Then Gakaara plunges into dialogue, although, at times, as is the case for instance with Ni Nii Ndina Nyarwimbo (Me and Nyarwimbo), dialogue precedes the opening section.

We are given little clue to the personal appearance of characters and full-scale descriptions almost never occur in the Bible.

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(54) This is what Gérard Genette calls the "singulative" as against the "iterative sense", see Figures III, Paris, Seuil 1972, p. 146.

(55) Cf. Alter, op. cit., p. 80.

(56) Cf. Berlin, op. cit., p. 34.

The Philistine Goliath is one of the few exceptions. The thematic purpose of this exceptional attention to physical detail is obvious: the comparison with David, the clever Israelite shepherdboy(57).

In Gakaara's stories we can only find one example of detailed description: the "heathen" Maasai Ole Mulai in Ungihonoka... no Tuhikanie (If You Become a Christian... We'll Get Married). He is a Maasai and hence an "outsider" among the Gikuyu, just as the Philistine Goliath is among the Israelites, and for this reason his "strange" appearance must be portrayed, especially in contrast with the "civilized" and Christian Gikuyu girl(58).

The Philistines vs the Israelites:

> "A champion named Goliath, who was from Gath, came out of the Philistine camp. he was over nine feet tall. He had a bronze helmet on his head and wore a coat of scale armour of bronze weighting five thousand shekels. On his legs he wore bronze greaves, and a bronze javelin was slung on his back.
> His spear shaft was like a weaver's rod, and its iron point weighed six hundred shekels. His shield bearer went ahead of him" (Samuel 17:4-7).

The Maasai vs the Gikuyu:

> "Ole Mulai wore two long clothes smeared with ochre. He wore his long hair in a pigtail. It was coated with a mixture of ochre and oil and he had a thin leather band around his neck. In his hands he carried a club and a long staff, as recently people have been forbidden to carry spears. On his feet he wore leather sandals. He was tall and well built and his light-skinned face shone with good health and oil. He had a small moustache and a big gap in his front teeth" (If You Become a Christian... We'll Get Married).

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(57) Cf. Alter, op. cit., p. 81.

(58) For a parallel between the two descriptions, see 10.10.

We have examined those features which are common to the Bible, the short story course and Gakaara's narratives. Let us now look at those characteristics which can only be found in the Bible and in Gakaara's stories.

1) REPORTED THOUGHT

The biblical preference for direct discourse is so pronounced that thought is almost invariably rendered as actual speech, that is, as quoted monologue. Attitude, of course -love, hate, fear, jealousy, and so forth- can be merely reported in a single appropriate verb because what is involved is in effect a summary of interior experience rather than a narrative realization of it(59). But, when an actual process of contemplating specific possibilities, sorting out feelings, weighing alternatives, making resolutions, is a moment in the narrative event, it is reported as direct discourse(60). Both in Gakaara's stories and in the Bible the formal similarity between uttered speech and unspoken thought is reinforced by the introductory formula "he said to himself".

(59) Alter, op. cit., pp. 67-8.

(60) Cf. 10.5.

3) THE "INTERNAL" AUDIENCE

We have already remarked on the presence of an audience "within" the story in Gakaara's narratives(61). They often comment on the happenings and, in some cases, even influence the development of the plot.

In the New Testament in particular we do find an "internal" audience, which the authors refer to as "the crowd".

There is often a crowd of people who follow Jesus, react to the most important events and eye-witness to his miracles. Let us see an example, "Two Blind Men Receive Sight":

> "As Jesus and his disciples were leaving Jericho, a large crowd followed him.
> Two blind men were sitting by the roadside, and when they heard that Jesus was going by, they shouted: 'Lord, Son of David, have mercy on us!'
> The crowd rebuked them and told them to be quiet, but they shouted all the louder (...)" (Matthew 20:29-31).

4) DIDACTICISM

In the Bible the writers give each fictional situation, with minimal intrusion by the author, a marked thematic direction as well as moral-psychological depth(62).

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(61) See 8.1 and 10.19.

(62) Alter, op. cit., p. 86.

Every human agent in Gakaara's stories and in the Bible is allowed the freedom to struggle with his destiny through his own words and acts.

Each character manifests or reveals himself or herself chiefly through dialogue, but also significantly through action, without the imposition of an obtrusive apparatus of interpretation rand judgement on the part of the authors, who are omniscient and reliable(63).

5) THE IMPORTANCE OF THE WRITTEN WORD

The value attributed by Gakaara to the written word originated neither from, obviously, Gikuyu oral literature nor from the short story course.

The written word features as an important element in all his stories and it may be explained as an influence of the Bible and of the Protestant reading of the Bible in particular.

In the biblical view, words underline reality. With words God called the world into being: "He spoke and the world was created" (Psalms 33:6).

In the proclamation of the "word" the salvation-occurrence is present. Salvation takes place in the biblical word, which approaches the hearers, or readers, to God and compels them to decide for or against His word.

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(63) Ibidem, p. 87. See also 8.3 and 10.2.

The word is so powerful that "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:12-13).

We have already remarked that in Gakaara's stories words are very important, whether they are spoken or written. But the spoken word must be written down to become permanent and reliable(64). In Me and Nyarwimbo, for instance, the elder verbally puts an end to the quarrel, but he asks the two parties to sign a paper as confirmation of their oral agreement. Similarly, the verbal promises between the two lovers in 16 Kinds of Love, are easily broken and the mother blames her daughter, who has been deserted by her lover, for having trusted his words without asking him to "sign a written agreement" with her(65).

The importance attributed by Gakaara to the written word is not only reflected in his stories, but also in his prison diary.

When he was in detention he kept on writing petitions to the government(66). He also asked for the written rules regulating the camp, because he did not trust the camp

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(64) On the role of the written word in Gakaara's first work of fiction, see 8.1.

(65) "He Who Does Not Listen to Advice Ends Up in Trouble", 16 Kinds of Love, Appendix 2.4.

(66) See 3.5.

officer who had told him that all detainees had to work:

> "I Gakaara wa Wanjau, requested him to show us the written law pertaining to forced labour"(67).

The author's interest in and respect for the written word is also evident from the job he chose. Gakaara, as a writer and publisher, is a man who "works" with the written word.

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(67) Diary, English translation, p. 64 (my emphasis).

11. COMPLETE BIBLIOGRAPHY OF GAKAARA'S WRITINGS

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Wa-Nduuta Akigura Mwari (Wa-Nduuta Married His Daughter), Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 2, September 1976(2).

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Wa-Nduuta Akiandikithia Muiritu (Wa-Nduuta Found a Job for a Girl), Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 4, November 1976(3).

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Wa-Nduuta Akihunithia Wangui (Wa-Nduuta Got Wangui to Have an Abortion), Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 7, February 1977(5).

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(1) This story was first published in January 1967, see under Ndugeta Ungi Maraya (Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute), Atiriri Series No. 2. The 1976 edition contains the follow-up originally published in February 1967 at the end of Ungihonoka... no Tuhikanie (If You Become a Christian... We'll Get Married), Atiriri Series No. 3.

(2) The booklet contains a short story entitled "Gathamai Kuonio Nganga Mbute ni Mundu Wanja" (Gathamai Was Taught a Lesson by a Woman) and written by a reader K.E. Gichuki from Nairobi (pp. 17-20).

(3) This issue contains also the ending of the story contained in Gikuyu na Mumbi No. 3 (pp. 17-20).

(4) I could not find a copy of this issue.

(5) Pp. 16-19 contain a story, "Mundu Wanja Ugwati" (A Dangerous Woman) by Maita wa G., a reader from Nairobi.

Wa-Nduuta Gukomera Mbeca Bengi-ini (Wa-Nduuta Lay on the Money in the Bank), Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 8, March 1977.

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(6) This booklet contains the ending of the story published in Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 11 (pp. 15-19).

(7) This issue contains a short story, "Mbaara Iria Yaciarire Wendo" (The Fight That Brought about Love) by a reader, Nginya Ndegwa, from Nyahururu (pp. 13-18).

(8) P. 13 and pp. 15-18 contain an article on inferiority complexes. In 1974 the articles were collected in a single volume, see 11.12 under Kihonia kia Mirimu ya Kwiigirira (How to Cure Inferiority Complexes).

(9) Pp. 16-18 contain an article on inferiority complexes (cf. note 8).

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Wa-Nduuta na Gathiigia Kurathimirwo Uhiki (Wa-Nduuta and Gathiigia's Marriage Was Blessed), Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 21, December 1980(13).

Wa-Nduuta Kurigitithia Gathiigia (Wa-Nduuta Took Gathiigia to a Witch-doctor), Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 22, January 1982(14).

Wa-Nduuta Akihererwo ni Njambi (Njambi ~~Said Sorry~~ Apologized to Wa-Nduuta), Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 23, February 1982.

Wa-Nduuta Ugo-ini wa Kunyiihia Uciari (Wa-Nduuta ~~Speech~~ Introduced Family Planning), Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 24, March 1982(15).

Wa-Nduuta Gutebeebio ni Karorina (Wa-Nduuta Was Frightened by Karorina), Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 25, April 1982.

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(10) P. 18 contains an article on inferiority complexes (cf. notes 8 and 9).

(11) Pp. 16-17 contain an article on inferiority complexes (cf. notes 8, 9 and 10).

(12) The booklet also contains the ending of the story published in Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 19.

(13) Pp. 15-18 contain the ending of the story contained in Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 20.

(14) Pp. 13-20 contain the ending of the story published in Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 21.

(15) Pp. 13-15 contain the ending of the story published in Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 23.

Wa-Nduuta Kwigarura Mutumia (Wa-Nduuta Disguised Himself as a Woman), Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 26, May 1982.

Wa-Nduuta na Karorina Gutuirwo (Wa-Nduuta and Karorina Were Prosecuted), Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 27, June 1982. Sentenced

Wa-Nduuta Hingo ya Paawa (Wa-Nduuta at the Time of the Coup), Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 28, December 1982(16).

Wa-Nduuta Hingo ya Paawa: Gicunji gia Keeri (Wa-Nduuta at the Time of the Coup: Part Two), Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 29, January 1983(17).

Wa-Nduuta Guthitangwo ni Muka wa Conjo (Wa-Nduuta Was Accused by Conjo's Wife), Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 30, February 1983(18).

Wa-Nduuta Kugaya Mugunda wa Thothaiti na Hinya (Wa-Nduuta and the Farmers' Society), Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 31, March 1983(19).
↳ Enforced the Partition of the land of the Cooperative

(16) This story has been reprinted in a separate booklet containing all wa-Nduuta's adventures at the time of the coup (Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine Nos. 28, 29, 30 and 31), see under: Wa-Nduuta Hingo ya Paawa (Wa-Nduuta at the Time of the Coup), Karatina, Gakaara Press, July 1984.

(17) Actually this booklet contains the second episode of Wa-Nduuta Hingo ya Paawa (wa-Nduuta at the Time of the Coup), pp. 3-5, whereas pp. 7-20 present a new story Wa-Nduuta Makirua na Therekari Wake (Wa-Nduuta Fought With His Secretary). In the list of "the issues of the magazine published so far" contained in No. 31 (p. 20), No. 29 is listed under the title of Wa-Nduuta Makirua na Therekari Wake, whereas on the cover of No. 29 we read Wa-Nduuta Hingo ya Paawa: Gicunji gia Keeri (wa-Nduuta at the Time of the Coup: Part Two), see also notes 16 and 20.

(18) It contains the second episode of "wa-Nduuta at the time of the coup" and also the ending of the story published in Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 29. I could not find a copy of this booklet, but we could read the second episode in the collection published in July 1984 (see note 16).

(19) It contains the fourth and last episode of wa-Nduuta's adventures at the time of the coup (pp. 13-18). See also note 16.

Wa-Nduuta Hingo ya Paawa: kuuma 1 Aug. Nginya Guthikwo gwa Conjo 12 Aug. 82 (Wa-Nduuta at the Time of the Coup: from 1 August to the Death of Conjo 12 August 82), Karatina, Gakaara Press, June 1984 (collection of the episodes of wa-Nduuta at the time of the coup contained in Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine Nos. 28, 29, 30 and 31)(20).

Wa-Nduuta Kurega na Muti Wake (Wa-Nduuta ~~Denied~~ Withheld His ~~Vote~~ Voting Card), Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 32, July 1983(21).

Wa-Nduuta Kuiywo Muti ni Aka Aake (Wa-Nduuta Was Stolen His Voting Card by His Wives) Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 33, August 1983(22).

Wa-Nduuta Gikunguira Miaka 20 ~~kia~~ ya Mau Mau (Wa-Nduuta Celebrated the 20th Anniversary ~~of~~ Mau Mau), Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 34, December 1983.

Wa-Nduuta Gutigirwo Gakenge Ndaaci-ini (Wa-Nduuta Left with a Baby at the Dance), Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 35, January 1984(23).

Wa-Nduuta Kurihio Ihu ni Mwanake (Wa-Nduuta ~~Paid~~ Made to Pay Compensation for a Pregnancy ~~on Behalf of~~ by a Young Man), Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 36, February 1984(24).

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(20) In the preface we read that the book is a collection of Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine Nos 28, 29, 30 and 31. Actually No. 31 contains another narrative and, at the end, the fourth and last part of the adventures of Wa-Nduuta at the time of the coup (cf. note 17).

(21) Pp. 12-19 contain part of Ugwati wa Muthungu Muiru (The Danger of Black European), see 11.9.

(22) Pp. 13-20 contain part of Ugwati wa Muthungu Muiru (The Danger of Black European), see 11.9.

(23) Pp. 12-18 contain the beginning of the story published in Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 3, Wa-Nduuta na Mureri wa Jeneti (Wa-Nduuta and Jeneti's Maid). It was probably a mistake since the story does not continue in the next issue.

(24) Pp. 13-18 contain the ending of the story published in Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 35, Wa-Nduuta Gutigirwo Gakenge Ndaaci-ini (Wa-Nduuta Was Left with a Baby at the Dance).

Wa-Nduuta Iruga-ini ria Gukunguira Arutani (Wa-Nduuta at a Party in Honour of the Teachers), Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 37, April 1984.

Wa-Nduuta na Mwari wa Minitha (Wa-Nduuta and the Minister's Daughter), Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 38, May 1984.

Wa-Nduuta Agiciiririra Muiritu Thaata (Wa-Nduuta ~~Was Taken to Court by~~ a Barren Girl), Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 39, November 1984.

Wa-Nduuta na Mwitumi Kuonia Gitonga Nganga Mbute (Wa-Nduuta and Mwitumi Taught a Lesson to the Rich Man), Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 40, May 1985(25).

Wa-Nduuta na Muiritu wa Gikunuri (Wa-Nduuta and the Girl of the Bottle-Opener), Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 41, 1985(26); repr. June 1990.

Wa-Nduuta na Mwanake wa Kuririo ni Muiritu (Wa-Nduuta and the Young Man Who Cried Because of a Girl), Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 42, December 1985.

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(25) We read on page 20 that the story will continue in the following issue of the magazine, but actually it does not as No. 41 contains a new story.

(26) I have the 1990 edition, thus I do not know the month of publication of the first edition. Pp. 9-10 contain part of Ugwati wa Muthungu Muiru (The Danger of Black European), see 11.9.

11.2 Other Narratives(27)

Uhoro wa Ugurani (The Story of a Marriage), Karatina, African Book Writers Ltd 1946; repr. Ngwenda Unjurage (I Want You to Kill Me), Nairobi, September 1951(28); repr. Gakaara Publishing Service 1961; repr. January 1966; repr. Gakaara Book Service, Atiriri Series No. 5, 1967; repr. Gakaara Press 1985(29).

Ni Nii Ndina Nyarwimbo (Me and Nyarwimbo), Atiriri Series No. 1, Nairobi, Gakaara Book Service, December 1966.

Ndugeta Ungi Maraya (Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute), Atiriri Series No. 2, January 1967(30); rev. enl. ed. November 1987.

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(27) I could not find the details pertaining all the books mentioned in the following bibliography. I checked the bibliography with the author, thus, wherever a question mark is found, it shows that Gakaara himself could not complete the reference.

(28) Since Gakaara's publishing house was registered the following year no indication of the publishing house is given in the booklet.

(29) The same booklet also appeared under the title Naguo Uhoro wa Ugurani Ni Atia? (And What About the Marriage?). In the seventies Gakaara translated the booklet into English and Kiswahili (see under I Want You to Kill Me and Nataka Uniue), but the translations are no longer available. The author himself has no copies.

(30) Pp. 1-4 contain an article on inferiority complexes entitled "Witue mundu Biu" ("Be a Complete Person"), see also under: Ungihonoka... no Tuhikanie (If You Become A Christian... We'll Get Married) and Kihonia kia Mirimu ya Kwiigirira (How to Cure Inferiority Complexes). Pp. 4-5 contain an article on how to do business "Wirute Miario ya Biaciara" ("Learn How to Talk to Your Customers", or literally "Learn the Words of Business").The narrative Ndugeta Ungi Maraya (Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute) was published again in August 1976 as Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 1 (cf. note 1). The 1976 edition contains also the follow-up to the story originally published at the end of

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Ungihonoka...no Tuhikanie (If You Become a Christian... We'll Get Married), Atiriri Series No. 3, Nairobi, Gakaara Book Service, February 1967(31).

Nyakinyua Muteti (Nyakinyua the Political Activist), Atiriri Series No. 4, Nairobi, Gakaara Book Service, March 1967.

Ihu ni Riau? (Who Is Responsible for Her Pregnancy?), Nairobi, Gakaara Book Service 1952.

Murata wa Mwene (~~The Owner's~~ Personal Friend), Nairobi, Gakaara Book Service 1952.

O Kirima Ngagua (To Whatever Destination), Nairobi, Gakaara Book Service 1952.

11.3 Short Stories

Ndikenjerwo Mbui Mucii Uyu (I Won't Be Shaved in This House), unpublished, 1964(32).

11.4 Poetry

Marebeta Ikumi ma Wendo (Ten Love Songs/Poems), Nairobi, Gakaara Book Service 1952; rev. enl. ed. Mawendo Mithemba 16 (16 Kinds of Love), Karatina, Gakaara Press, June 1968; 2nd ed., December 1971.

Atiriri Series no. 3, see under: Ungihonoka... no Tuhikanie (If You Become a Christian... We'll Get Married).

(31) Pp. 13-14 contain the follow-up to the story published in Atiriri Series No. 2, see under: Ndugeta Ungi Maraya (Don't Call Anybody A Prostitute). Pp. 15-16 contain an article on inferiority complexes entitled "Witue Mundu Biu" ("Be a Complete Person)", see also under Ndugeta Ungi Maraya (Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute), Atiriri Series No. 2 and Kihonia kia Mirimu ya Kwiigirira (How to Cure Inferiority Complexes).

(32) This story was awarded the second prize in a contest called the 'Creative Short Story Competition' sponsored by the East African Literature Bureau in 1964, but it was never published.

11.5 Plays

Reke Acirithio ni Mehia Make (Let the Guilt of His Crimes Weigh Heavy on His Conscience), Community Development and Rehabilitation Department Athi River Detention Camp, July 1956(33).

Tahika Waariga (Vomit it out), Kajiado Detention Camp, March 1953(34).

11.6 Political Writings

Mageria Nomo Mahota (Make an Attempt in Order to Succeed), Nairobi, Gakaara Book Service, Publication No. 1, April 1951(35).

Witikio wa Gikuyu na Mumbi (The Creed of Gikuyu and Mumbi), Nairobi, Gakaara Book Service, August 1952(36); rev. ed. Gakaara Press, September 1989.

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(33) The camp authorities asked for an English translation of the play before showing it. It was translated as Let His Wickdness Judge Him.

(34) This play got lost. Gakaara writes in his prison diary that he composed "a play at Kajiado [Detention Camp] with the collaboration of Benson Gatoonye and Giitwa wa Ndimu (...) It featured a traditional Gikuyu medicineman. Its title was Tahika Waariga, which literally means 'Vomit it out', a phrase medicineman would use in ceremonies of cleansing" (Diary, English translation, p. 22). Gakaara gave the manuscript to an officer "to deliver it to Nairoobi publishers (...) Although Dennis [the officer] offered to deliver the manuscript, he never did" (Ibidem, p. 22).

(35) This is Gakaara's translation from the Kiswahili of Roho ya Kiume na Bidii kwa Mwafrika (The Spirit of Manhood and Perseverance for the African). An extremely free English translation of the Gikuyu version is contained in Appendix 4 of Gakaara's prison diary op. cit., English translation, pp. 227-243.

(36) The Creed is printed on a page-sized sheet of cardboard folded in two. My English translation appears in 2.9. An English translation is also contained in Appendix 8 of Gakaara's diary op. cit., English translation, p. 250.

Kanu Niyo Gitugi gia Kenya (KANU Is the Pillar of Kenya), Nairobi, Gakaara Publishing Service, Publication No. 3, June 1960(37).

Agikuyu Mau Mau na Wiyathi: 1 (The Agikuyu, Mau Mau and Independence: 1), Karatina, Gakaara Book Service, August 1971.

Agikuyu Mau Mau na Wiyathi: Gicunji gia Keeri (The Agikuyu, Mau Mau and Independence: Part Two), Karatina, Gakaara Press, August 1971(38).

Mwandiki wa Mau Mau Ithaamirio-ini, Nairobi, Heinemann Kenya 1983(39).

11.7 Collections of Political Songs

Nyimbo cia Gikuyu na Mumbi, Nairobi, Gakaara Book Service, August 15, 1952.

Nyimbo cia Gukunguira Wiyathi (Songs to Celebrate Independence), Nairobi, Gakaara Publishing Service, July 1963(40).

Nyimbo cia Mau Mau (Mau Mau Songs), Karatina, Gakaara Press 1989(41).

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(37) The booklet contains a brief history of the Kenya African National Union (KANU) written by Gakaara and several extracts from speeches by the major KANU politicians. In the front cover we read that the pamphlet was also available in Kiswahili.

(38) This was the first book printed by Gakaara's printing firm, Gakaara Press (see 5.4). On p. 61 Gakaara announces the publication of the third part of the book, but he never published it. He is preparing a revised edition of the second part.

(39) Winner of the Noma Award in 1984 (see 5.7). For the English translation, see under Mau Mau Author in Detention.

(40) The last two songs are in Kiswahili. Fourteen of the thirty-one songs contained in this collection appear in Nyimbo cia Mau Mau (Mau Mau Songs), see next entry.

(41) See preceding note.

11.8 Gikuyu Traditions

Kiguni gia Twana (Advice for Children), Nairobi, Gakaara Book Service, 1951(42).

Turwimbo na Tumathako twa Twana (Songs and Games for Children), Karatina, Gakaara Press, August 1968; repr. November 1971; rev. ed. March 1988(43).

Wikumie na Muhiriga Waku (Be Proud of Your Clan), Nairobi, Equatorial Publishers, January 1961(44); 2nd edition, January 1963; rev. enl. ed. Mihiriga ya Agikuyu (Gikuyu Clans), March 1967; repr. Gakaara Press, November 1980.

Nyimbo cia Ihii (Songs and Dances for Youth), Karatina, Gakaara Book Service, January 19710.

Kienyu kia Ngai Kirima-ini gia Tumutumu (The Warrior of God on Tumutumu Hill), Nairobi, Gakaara Book Service, August 1952.

11.9 Gikuyu Language

Ugwati wa Muthungu Muiru (The Danger of the Black European), Karatina, Gakaara Press 1974(45); rev. ed. 1978.

11.10 Textbooks

Thooma Giigikuyu Kiega: Ibuku ria Mbere (Learn Good Gikuyu: Book Number One). Karatina, Gakaara Press, March 1980; 2nd ed. January 1986; rev. ed. January 1988.

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(42) Several songs contained in this booklet were reprinted in Turwimbo na Tumathako twa Twana (Songs and Games for Children), see next entry.

(43) See preceding note.

(44) In the enlarged and revised 1967 edition we read that the first edition was published in January 1960, but it is clearly a misprint as in January 1960 the author was under a restriction order and therefore was not allowed to publish any books until May 1960 when the restriction was suspended. I asked Gakaara and he confirmed that the date of the first edition was actually January 1961.

(45) Parts of the first edition of this booklet appear in Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine Nos. 32, 33 and 41.

Thooma Giigikuyu Kiega: Ibuku ria keeri "A" (Learn Good Gikuyu: Book Number Two "A"), Karatina, Gakaara Press, April 1980; 2nd edition, January 1986; rev. ed. January 1988.

Thooma Giigikuyu Kiega: Ibuku ria Keeri "B" (Learn Good Gikuyu: Book Number Two "B"), Karatina, Gakaara Press, April 1980.

Thooma Giigikuyu Kiega: Ibuku ria Gatatu "A" (Learn Good Gikuyu: Book Number Three "A"), Karatina, Gakaara Press, January 1986 (rev. ed., January 1988).

Thooma Giigikuyu Kiega: Ibuku ria Gatatu "B" (Learn Good Gikuyu: Book Number Three "B"), Karatina, Gakaara Press, January 1988.

Mwandikire wa Giigikuyu Karing'a: Ibuku ria Mbere, Karatina, Gakaara Press, January 1991. (Pure Gikuyu Orthography: Book 1)

Mwandikire wa Giigikuyu Karing'a: Ibuku ria Keeri, Karatina, Gakaara Press, January 1991. (Pure Gikuyu Orthography: Book 2)

Mwandikire wa Giigikuyu Karing'a: Ibuku ria Gatatu, Karatina, Gakaara Press, January 1991. (Pure Gikuyu Orthography: Book 3)

11.11 Hand-Books

Murutani wa Thiomi Ithatu Hamwe: Giigikuyu, Kiswahili, English (The Teacher of Three Languages Together: Gikuyu, Kiswahili, English), Karatina, Gakaara Press, March 1989(46).

11.12 Other Subjects

Wee na... Wonjorie Waku: Tondu wa Onjoria na Arimi (You and... Business: for Traders and Farmers), Nairobi, Gakaara Book Service 1965.

Uria Mathira Ikuritĩ (The Progress Made by Karatina Area), Karatina, Gakaara Book Service 1974.

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(46) Gakaara's handbook has been translated into Kikamba, Dholuo and Kalenjin, see 11.19.3. The booklet was also translated into Kikisii, Baluhya and Kalenjin, but the booklet have not appeared yet.

Kihonia kia Mirimu ya Kwiigirira (How to Cure Inferiority Complexes), Karatina, Gakaara Press 1974; rev. ed. Mirimu ya Kwiigirira (Inferiority Complexes), 1979(47).

11.13 Short Stories in Kiswahili(48)

"Roda na noti ya twenti" (Roda and the Banknote of Twenty Shillings), Taifa Kenya, April 2, 1964.

"Na Kumbe alikuwa ni dada yake" (And She Was His Sister), Nyota, Mei 1964.

11.14 Political Writings in Kiswahili(49)

Roho ya Kiume na Bidii kwa Mwafrika (The Spirit of Manhood and Perseverance for the African), Nakuru, Highland Printing Press, November 1948(50).

Wanawake Sizu Hizi (Women Today), Nakuru, Highland Printing Press, December 1948.

11.15 Collections of Political Songs in Kiswahili

Nyimbo za Uhuru (Freedom Songs), Nairobi, Gakaara Publishing Service 1963(?)(51).

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(47) Parts of this booklet appeared in: Ndugeta Ungi Maraya (Don't Call Anyboody a Prostitute), Atiriri Series No. 2, January 1967 (pp. 1-4), Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 15, June 1978 (p. 13 and pp. 15-18), No. 16, July 1978 (pp. 16-18), No. 17, August 1978 (p. 18) and No. 18, January 1979 (pp. 16-18).

(48) In the fifties, while he was in detention, Gakaara published a few short stories in Kiswahili in Baraza (cf. Diary, English translation, p. 137). The author has no copies and he cannot remember the titles of the stories.

(49) I could not find any copies of the titles listed above and Gakaara does not have copies either.

(50) For the Gikuyu translation by Gakaara, see 11.6 under Mageria Nomo Mahota (Make an Attempt in Order to Succeed).

(51) The booklet is not dated, but it must date from 1963.

Nyimbo za Kushangilia Uhuru (Songs to Welcome Independence), Nairobi, Gakaara Publishing Service 1963(52).

11.16 English Translations

A Kikuyu Market Literature: Gakaara wa Njau and the Atiriri Series, Ba Shiru Literature Supplement No. 1, 1983 (translations of Atiriri Series Nos. 1,2,3,4 and 5 by Patrick R. Bennett)(53).

I Want You to Kill Me, (translated by the author)(54)

Mau Mau Author in Detention, (translated by Ngigi Njoroge) Nairobi, Heinemann Kenya 1988(55).

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(52) This collection was published to celebrate the independence of Kenya (December 1963). Four of the sixteen songs appear in Gikuyu in KANU Niyo Gitugi gia Kenya (KANU Is the Pillar of Kenya). The booklet also contains the Kiswahili translation of a well-known Gikuyu song on the Mau Mau General Dedan Kimathi. The Gikuyu original appears in Nyimbo cia Gukunguira Wiyathi (Songs to Celebrate Independence) and in Nyimbo cia Mau Mau (Mau Mau Songs).

(53) Bennett translated into English the following narratives by Gakaara: Ungihonoka... no Tuhikanie (If You Become a Christian... We'll Get Married), Ngwenda Unjurage (I Want You to Kill Me), Ni Nii Ndina Nyarwimbo (Me and Nyarwimbo), Ndugeta Ungi Maraya (Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute) and Nyakinyua Muteti (Nyakinyua the Political Activist). Bennett writes in his introduction that he did not translate the stories as they were originally published, but the four versions that Gakaara had revised especially for him (Bennett, op. cit., p. v). Bennett does not explain why he decided to do so and I believe that it would have been more useful if he had translated the original stories.

(54) The booklet is no longer available and Gakaara told me that he was not particularly happy with his translation.

(55) My comments on Njoroge's translation can be found in the course of this study, esp. in 3.

11.17 Swahili Translations

Nataka Uniue (I Want You to Kill Me), Karatina, Gakaara Press 1970 (translated by the author)(56).

Ujuzi Maalum kwa Wafanyi Biashara (How to Do Business), Karatina, Gakaara Press(57).

11.18 Periodicals (Editor of)(58)

Waigua atia? (What's the News?), monthly, April-October 1952.

Atiriri! Gitugi kia Mucii (Listen! The Pillar of the Home), weekly, cyclostyled, Athi River Detention Camp, August 1956 - October 1957.

Gikuyu na Mumbi (Gikuyu and Mumbi), monthly, Karatina, November 1972 - 1976.

11.19 Gakaara as a Publisher

11.19.1. The African Book Writers Ltd: Karatina 1946-1947(59)

Tribal History Pamphlets Series:

Kanja, H. Munene(60), The Story of Wakikuyu, 1946.

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(56) This work is no longer available.

(57) I could not find a copy and therefore I was not able to complete the reference. Gakaara intends to translate this booklet into other Kenyan languages.

(58) I have explained in this study that, in spite of its title, Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine (Gikuyu and Mumbi Magazine) is simply a series containing the adventures if Kiwai wa-Nduuta (see 5.5). That is why the "magazine" is not included in the list of periodicals that follows.

(59) The publishing venture was not owned by Gakaara alone, but belonged to all directors and shareholders (see 2.3). All books listed below were published either in 1946 or 1947 and Gakaara himself cannot remember exactly the dates of publication.

(60) In the forties the late H. Munene Kanja was a trade unionist. He was one of the five directors of ABW Ltd

Mwangi, A. Gathuya(61), Kikuyu Witch Doctrine(62)

Political Pamphlets Series:

Kirira, J.W.(63), The African and His Freedom

Kirira, J.W. The Need for Unity

Kirira, J.W., The Adventures of the People

Kanja, H. Munene, Successful Employment(64)

Mugweru, Mwaniki; Njung'wa, Karimu, African Progress

Fiction(65):

Mugweru, Mwaniki(66), Riua Ritanathua (Before the Sun Sets) 1946 (repr. Nairobi, Gakaara Book Service 1952).

11.19.2 Gakaara Book Service: Nairobi 1952

Political Pamphlets:

Mugweru, Mwaniki, Kamuingi Koyaga Ndiri (A Small Group of People Lifts the Heavy Mortar) 1952 (1st publ. 1946)(67).

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(61) A. Gathuya Mwangi was a shareholder of the ABW Ltd

(62) Gakaara cannot remember whether this booklet, announced in Kanja's The Story of Wakikuyu, was actually published.

(63) In the forties the late J.W. Kirira was a teacher. He was one of the five directors of ABW Ltd

(64) Gakaara cannot remember this title among those published by the African Book Writers Limited. The booklet might have been among the works they intended to publish, but actually did not.

(65) For the other book of fiction published by the African Book Writers Limited, see 11.2, under Uhoro wa Ugurani (The Story of a Marriage).

(66) Mwaniki Mugweru was one of the five directors of African Book Writers Limited. On Mugweru, see 1.12, 3.2, 3.3, 3.7 and 3.9.

(67) See 1.12.

Mugweru, Mwaniki, Wiyathi wa Andu Airu (Freedom for Black People) 1952.

? Kenya Ni Yakwa (Kenya Is Mine), 1952(68).

? Miikarire ya Thikwota (How the Squatters Live), 1952(69).

Fiction:

Githuku, Samuel(70), Mwari Mweru ni Magambo (A Beautiful Daughter is Trouble), 1952.

Mugweru, Mwaniki, Riua Ritanathua (Before the Sun Sets), 1952 (1st publ. African Book Writers Limited 1946).

11.19.3 Gakaara Press: Karatina 1971- (71)

In Gikuyu:

Gategithimo ka A.I.P.C (Catechism of the African Independent Pentecostal Church), 1977(?)(72).

Gategithimo ga P.C.E.A. (Catechism of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa), 1972 (repr. 1990)(73).

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(68) Gakaara cannot remember the name of the author.

(69) Cf. preceding note.

(70) Before independence Samuel Githuku worked with the Kenya Information Office.

(71) Before founding Gakaara Press in 1971, Gakaara had published several booklets as Gakaara Publishing House in 1961-4 and Gakaara Book Service in 1966-7 (see 4.3 and 5.3), but he did not bring out works by other authors.

(72) I could not find a copy, therefore I do not know the date of publication. This booklet is advertised for the first time in Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 9, April 1977.

(73) This catechism was written by a CSM minister and was originally published by William Blackwood in the twenties (see Interview, Appendix 1).

Irvine, Clive(74), Uhiki wa Gikeno (Happy Marriage), Karatina, Gakaara Press 1971.

Gitene, Njogu, Wigirie Maithori (Wipe Your Tears), n.d.

Irimu, Agnes Kabugo, Murigu Uria We (The Real Murigu), March 1971.

Mburu, Charity Muthoni, Marua 23 ma Mutumia na Mwari (23 Letters between a Mother and Her Daughter), 1974(75).

Njugi, Wakaba, Uria Biaciara Iharaga (How to Do Business), August 1972.

Ngunju, E. Mwai, Wirute Kuriithia Nguku (Learn to Keep Poultry) 1975.

In Dholuo:

Gakaara wa Wanjau; Obura, Simon Ojwang'a, Japuonj Mar Dhok Adek Kanyachiel: Dho-Luo, Kiswahili, English (The Teacher of Three Languages Together: Dholuo, Kiswahili, English), Karatina, Gakaara Press, March 1989(76).

In English:

Muchoki, Grace N., He Killed Me Softly, March 1979; 2nd ed. January 1989.

Mwangi, Jane, Advice to a Teenage Girl, January 1990.

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(74) The author is a British minister of the P.C.E.A. who has been in Kenya since 1919.

(75) The booklet was originally written in English and published in 1972 (see under Twenty Three Letters). At the end of the Gikuyu translation there are twelve questions about the story which underline the moral. The author is the wife of Rev John Mburu of the Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA). She writes in the acknowledgement that her husband "first suggested this book". The work was sponsored by the P.C.E.A. Youth Department.

(76) This is a translation of Gakaara's hand-book Murutani wa Thiomi Ithatu Hamwe: Giigikuyu, Kiswahili, English (The Teacher of Three Languages Together: Gikuyu, Kiswahili, English), see 11.11.

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(77) For the Gikuyu translation, see under Marua 23 ma Mutumia na Mwari (23 Letters between a Mother and Her Daughter).

(78) Cf. note 76.

(79) Cf. notes 76 and 78.

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APPENDICES 1 TO 3

CONTENTS

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW WITH GAKAARA WA WANJAU

Karatina, 27th July 1990

CP **Why in the preface of Ngwenda Unjurage [I Want You to Kill Me] did you claim that your sister was the author of the book?**

GW Because she was the one who told me the story and I wrote the book. She was in the same school with that girl who committed suicide. So, that's why she didn't want me to write the real name of the girl.

CP **Oh, I see... so it was a true story, more or less...**

GW Yes, as you say, more or less. You know, when you write a story you can say anything. Then people come to me and ask me: "Is this true?" [laughs]. Do you know Wa-Nduuta Hingo ya Paawa [Wa-Nduuta at the Time of the Coup]?

CP **Yes, I read it.**

GW People came to me and asked me: "So you were in Nairobi at the time of the attempted coup?" And I told them: "No, I was here in Karatina". "But it's all so true!" they said. Even with the wa-Nduuta stories, they tell me: "You write exactly what people do at home!" But that's why! [laughs] Because I can't write what people don't do. Moreover, most of my stories contain the Gikuyu customs, so that people can learn them. There were people

who were saying that a magazine in Gikuyu could never sell, but I proved to them that they were wrong...

CP **How many copies of Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine do you sell?**

GW Three thousand.

CP **Did you start with three thousand copies?**

GW No, I started with two thousand, then two thousand five hundred, till it went up to three thousand. But when I had a matatu [private vehicle for public transport] accident, in 1985, I had to close the magazine. That's why I want to revive it now. Since 1985 I haven't written any new wa-Nduuta story.

CP **Do you think that the fact that you were awarded the Noma helped you?**

GW Yes, it helped, it helped. It was useful also for the name. Many people wanted to see me. Even today people talk about it...

CP **You mean about the prison diary...**

GW About the diary, yes.

CP **Do you think that the Noma Award helped you to sell other books apart from the diary, which, by the way,**

wasn't published by your publishing house, but by Heinemann?

GW You see, I was awarded the Noma in 1984 and then I had that accident the following year, so I had not written many books, you see. But the other books, these textbooks I wrote after the accident, they are doing well.

CP **Do they sell better than your stories?**

GW Yes. You know, when the government, the Education Department, says that a book is good and the parents are told to buy that book, they do.

CP **Which books did you read when you were young?**

GW I don't know whether I can remember. Stories...I read some stories at school. But no Gikuyu books because, you know, there were no Gikuyu books at that time.

CP **What about the Bible? It had been translated into Gikuyu...**

GW Yes, the Bible was in Gikuyu. And there was a catechism in Gikuyu, the one I revised and published. I liked reading it very much, you see. Have you seen the catechism in Gikuyu, the P.C.E.A. [Presbyterian Church of East Africa] one?

CP **No. Have you got a copy?**

GW Yes, I'll show you... That was the book I used to read a great deal. I knew how to recite it.

CP **So, this catechism you revised and published is the very same book you used to read when you were young?**

GW Yes, the very same... Then I read the Bible, yes. And I liked songs. I liked songs when I went to Alliance High School. There were no books we read at Alliance: we were only directed to educational books, you see. There were no novels to read and maybe by that time you wouldn't have been allowed to read such things, novels, you see. They only directed us to religious books and educational ones, just that.

Now, what happened is that that catechism was written by an old reverend who used to come to Tumutumu mission station. He knew Gikuyu and he wrote the catechism in Gikuyu. This was the book he used to teach us Christianity and people liked it. We had to recite it. In order to be baptized, you had to pass an examination. They asked you questions like "What did Jesus do when he went to such and such place?", things like that [laughs]. So you had to recite all that to show that you knew all that was written in that (laughs). When the Mau Mau came... all these books got lost... in fact, many things were burned. Then, after independence, when I came here to Karatina... it was Mr Kibaki who had told me to come here. Do you know Mr Kibaki?

CP **Yes, I know him.**

GW When he was a Minister of Commerce, I went to him and I told him: "I want a loan because I'm writing books, I take them to the printing presses owned by Indians, and these Indians consume all the money I have and I don't get anything!" [laughs]. He said: "OK, but you are a publisher, you have a knowledge in publishing, so carry on". I said: "Yes, but I want to print my own books: write them, publish them and print them, so that I don't take them to Indians who are charging me too much for printing them". So he told me: "Well, if that is the case, you should go either to Nyeri or Karatina, buy a few machines, even if they are old, and start printing. Then we, the government, will come and help you to progress. But we do not want to give you the money to start, you have to start and then we'll support you".

This is how I came here. And when I came here, there were old people who were asking me about that catechism. So, what happened was that I went to Nairobi and I saw a copy of that book, without a cover, being sold in the streets. Then I took it and I said: "This is what I've been looking for!" I bought it for one shilling and, when I came back to Karatina, I reprinted it.

CP **Did you enjoy reading the Bible?**

GW The Bible, yes. Yes.

CP **Did you prefer the Old or the New Testament?**

GW The New.

CP **I see. It was the first to be translated into Gikuyu. In the twenties. The New Testament was translated in the fifties...**

GW Yes, I knew some of the translators. They were old. People of the age of my father.

CP **Can you remember their names?**

GW They were A. R. Barlow assisted by two Gikuyu Church elders, Stefano Kariamburi and Reuben Muriuki.

CP **Did your father read the Bible to you?**

GW Yes.

CP BIn English or Gikuyu?

GW In Gikuyu.

CP **What about oral performances? Did you ever listen to story-tellers?**

GW No. Not very much. But, when I was young, you know, these Gikuyu customs, it was evil to follow them, you see. Yes, I used to listen to some stories, and I have written some of them and I have included them in this Book Two [Thooma Giigikuyu Kiega: Ibuku ria Keri, Learn Good Gikuyu: Book Two]. I have written some of the stories I was told when I was young and I could still remember. I'll

always remember a story-teller, a woman called Nyakweiya. Whenever she came... because she used to come from this side [Karatina], you see, we were doing some sort of business, and she came to our place with her loads of potatoes and other things... by that time, you see, as my father was a religious person, she came and slept there and the following day he sent her to Tumutumu Hospital. That evening when she arrived at our place, we children were all happy: "Nyakweya has come and we are going to have the stories!"[laughs]

CP **So, this happened only once in a while. You didn't have many occasions to listen to oral performances, did you?**

GW No. And that was only being told stories, but nobody was interested in writing them, we did not know they were useful, we were only interested in listening to them.

CP **So, your reading consisted mostly of the Bible and that catechism...**

GW Yes, mostly the Bible and the catechism.

CP **What did your father think of Gikuyu customs?**

GW He was a minister, he didn't like them. When I went to dances in the evening, he used to come to pick me up and he beat me. When I left and went to intermediate school, I had a chance to go to those dances.

My father was killed during Mau Mau.

CP I read the story in your diary. But, to tell you the truth, it does not come out very clearly from the diary why he was killed. I understood it was because of a conflict over land and not because he was a Christian and his murderers were Mau Mau. I had to read the parts regarding your father several times... I think the reader may get confused and misunderstand the whole story, especially on reading the dedication ["To the respectful memory of my Father, Rev. Johana Wanjau, who was killed in the course of his Christian ministry during the War for Freedom"].

GW You are right: he was not killed because he was a minister. There was a conflict over land boundaries with my father's neighbours. When the Mau Mau started, these neighbours joined the Mau Mau people and killed him. If one hadn't known the whole story it would have seemed that my father was killed because he had refused to take the [Mau Mau] oath. When I was in detention some people from the government came to me, they said that I had sent those people to go and kill my father! [shakes his head] It was hurtful... Anyway...

CP When did you decide to become a writer?

GW It was in the forties. In 1946, when we left the army, we were a group of about twelve, twelve young

people. We had a business called African Book Writers Limited.

CP **What was the aim of the company?**

GW We just wanted to write. We published not more than ten booklets. I only published Uhoro wa Ugurani [The Story of a Marriage], which was the first title of Ngwenda Unjurage [I Want You to Kill Me].

CP **Were all of you ex-servicemen?**

GW Not all of us. Some of them were teachers in independent schools.

We didn't know anything about literature. When we saw we could write we decided to found a company and sell our booklets. We were interested both in writing and selling. Some were also interested in politics. We wrote and published some books, but the others soon gave up writing. What I did when our business was disbanded and everybody went his own way, I went to Nakuru [town]. I was employed as a clerk in Nakuru. But when I had published my first story [Uhoro wa Ugurani, The Story of a Marriage] with the African Book Writers Limited, I had seen that people were interested, you see, so I had the idea of carrying on... so that's how it happened... I was interested in writing politics because I was annoyed with some Europeans there, you see, in the Rift Valley, you see. I had to write Roho ya Kiume na Bidii kwa Mwafrika [The Spirit of Manhood and Perseverance for the African].

CP **Why did you choose to write your second book, Roho ya Kiume na Bidii kwa Mwafrika [The Spirit of Manhood and Perseverance for the African] in Kiswahili?**

GW Because I wanted the settlers to understand it.

CP **You mean you thought that if you had written it in Gikuyu they wouldn't have understood it?**

GW Yes. I was so annoyed about the situation that I wanted the settlers to understand. I wrote that nobody had asked them to come here and so on, as if I was speaking to them. At the same time I was exposing their lies to our people.

CP **I thought you wrote it in Kiswahili because you wanted to reach a wider audience, not only the Gikuyu, but other Kenyan peoples as well...**

GW Not exactly. I wanted to reach the Europeans. But it also reached the other tribes, although, by that time, not many tribes were interested in the fight for freedom. Only the Gikuyu and the Luo.

CP **And the Kamba.**

GW The Kamba, yes. My pamphlet was also read in Tanganyika. There was a man, an Indian, who was selling copies there. I can remember the name of the bookshop

where he was selling it, General Bookshop. He told me the book had sold out and wanted other copies.

CP **When did you decide to start the business of the publishing house?**

GW I had written that political pamhplet when I was in Nakuru and it had been received so seriously... When I moved to Nairobi in 1951, I thought of opening an office, a small office, at Wanza Mansion, in River Road , that building there, you see. I opened my office, it was just a room. Do you know Paul Ngei, the Minister?

CP **Yes...**

GW He was my schoolmate. He joined me there. He said: "So you opened an office there? I want to have mine next to yours!" (laughs) He opened another one. And even in the army we were together, you see... So he started his newspaper in Kikamba, it was called Wasya wa Mukamba [The Voice of the Kamba] and mine was Waigwa atia? [What's the News?], you see (laughs). Then I carried on, you see. And then people started taking my publishing house seriously, you see. They came to my office with what they had written. Then, when Kenyatta came back [in 1947] and this Mau Mau started in Kenya... people started bringing exercise-books with notes, I started collecting and writing political songs, you see. Some people thought that I was good at that, so they were bringing songs or they were sending them to me. And I took the manuscripts to The

Regal Printers to get them printed because I had no printing facilities: I had only a small office, and I was calling myself a publisher, you see ... But then I carried on... until that time in October 1952 when we were arrested.

CP **Where were you arrested in 1952?**

GW I was at home in Nairobi with my wife and children. It happened during the night. They said they had been sent by the government because of that Witikio wa Gikuyu na Mumbi [The Creed of Gikuyu and Mumbi]...

CP **Are you a Christian?**

GW I don't know what I am. I left Christianity during Mau Mau. I called myself Gakaara wa Wanjau. My Christian name was Jonah Johana Gakaara. In 1952 I dropped my Christian name, when I took the first oath.

CP **Did you take the two oaths?**

GW Yes.

CP **You know, this is not clear at all in your diary.**

GW I was not supposed to clarify everything, because we don't like talking about oaths. When we were in detention they wanted to know everything about the oath. We told them lies. Then they came back and asked again.

CP But they must have believed you, because you were granted parole, after your confession.

GW In my case, I stated it well. I told them where we were, in Nairobi, and who was there with us. But I never disclosed the second oath I had taken.

CP But, don't be offended, in a way you were co-operating with the authorities when you were at Athi River Rehabilitation Centre...

GW: Yes. You see, if you were sent to Athi River it meant that you were co-operating, everybody who was there was co-operating. There you had to demonstrate practically that you were co-operating in order to be freed. It was there that I was given the work of writing songs and so on. They knew I was a writer and the screening officer asked me to write a play. I could not refuse.

CP I think your diary is very interesting because you were neither a guerrilla fighter or a famous politician. There were already other books written by Mau Mau fighters and famous politicians. Your views are very personal and your personal experience during Mau Mau is very relevant because it gives a different insight into the Mau Mau period.

GW We weren't all fighters, or all politicians, all the Gikuyu people... These people who died, they died for their land. The Mau Mau fighters, they were not

politicians. [The Mau Mau general] Dedan Kimathi was not a politician.

CP The point I'm trying to make in my discussion of your diary is that you were not encouraging the armed struggle. You were part of the educated Gikuyu élite who demanded equal rights for Africans in Kenya. The colonialists misunderstood your Roho ya Kiume na Bidii kwa Mwafrika [The Spirit of Manhood and Perseverance for the African]. There you were even saying that the Europeans brought education and a better standard of life, but that the Africans were not allowed to attain them. You were not encouraging the armed struggle against the colonialists.

GW Yes, exactly. And, in fact, I was not in the actual fight. In my diary I tried to show that we detainees were quite different. Even the colonialists, afterwards, understood it better that Mau Mau didn't come from education, because most fighters were uneducated. Those people in the forest, they were not into freedom as we understand the word: they were fighting for their land. Well, this means that if you get your land, you will get freedom. But those people who were taking the oath, they were doing it because they were ready to fight for their land.

CP When you started writing you were mainly interested in politics...

GW Yes... then I went back to fiction and now I'm very much in education... educational books...

CP **Is this your main interest at present?**

GW Yes, you see, with this kind of publishing you can help people and at the same time you can make some money. You see, if you publish books that don't sell, this is not business...

CP **Are you interested in writing textbooks simply because they sell better than fiction?**

GW No, not only because of that. Because they sell better and also because they help our children, you know. They teach them proper Gikuyu. And I want to be an expert... they say I'm an expert in Gikuyu... so I can help our children and teach them proper Gikuyu. At present I'm writing another book to stress the importance of using the correct orthography, you see. We people, the old people, learned to write Gikuyu using the wrong orthography. But we don't want our children to follow this... So let us teach them to write properly, and this is what I'm doing, now.

CP **Do you like to be considered a publisher or a writer of fiction?**

GW I'm both. I'm an author. You see, sometimes I don't know what I am. People come to me when I'm in the

newspapers and ask me: "Hey Mzee ["Elder" in Kiswahili], what are you exactly? Are you a printer, a publisher, or an author? Because we don't know how to call you: you write, you publish, you print..." [laughs] I tell them: "I do all this, you can call me what you want...".

CP **So, you are all of them...**

GW Yes, I'm all of them. But I don't want to be simply a printer because I don't know much about printing, you see. My elder son is learning printing... this is not my job... this small office here, and a store... this is all a publisher wants [laughs]... and some capital! [laughs] Isn't it?

CP **So, you don't think that your fiction is the most important aspect of your work, do you?**

GW My fiction? No. Not very much... Hey! Am I not going to retire? [laughs] Am I not going to have a rest? [laughs] I should...

CP **No, no! You should go on and on!** [laughs])

GW I should! [laughs] I should go home and read what young people write. When I stay at home, there is always somebody who comes to my place and asks: "Where is the Mzee? Why hasn't he come to work?" [laughs] They come to my home, you see, and say: "I've come a long way from Nairobi to discuss this and that...".

CP **So, people who want to write in Gikuyu come to you for advice... Did you notice an increase or a decrease in the number of people who want to write in Gikuyu?**

GW Oh, they are increasing, oh yes! Especially these young people, yes. Yes, I have got so many manuscripts here, although they don't know... they haven't got the craft of writing. I've been thinking how I could get a school to teach them! [laughs] If I had the money, you see, I'd do it... Because these people, young boys and young girls, they write manuscripts, some write about love, but they don't know how to start, you see, most of them... It is not easy, you see, it is not easy the craft of writing, you see. So what to do? I tell them: "Yes, I can see you're good, your story is good, but you haven't written it in a proper way". And they say: "Then teach me...". But it's impossible for me to do that.

CP **So you think that, although the government is not encouraging national languages, there are more and more people who want to write in Gikuyu?**

GW Oh yes, yes. At first people didn't believe that a magazine in Gikuyu could work, you see. And when I succeeded, they said: "We fear you because you could make them read it and get interested in it".

CP **Are your readers young or old?**

GW Young.

CP **Young?**

GW Young. The Gikuyu are not good readers, you know, they are not good readers. That's why you find that these stories concern young people. Not the old people... I'm not interested... If you write a historical book, the old people will say: "We know all this". They'll say: "Gakaara has written what we know already, so there's no need for us to buy that book", you see. You know, old people are not particularly interested in reading. Only people who went to school are interested in reading books. Even when they leave school, they go on buying books.

CP **What is the age of your readers?**

GW Say from twenty to thirty years of age.

CP **So, your target is the young generation, isn't it?**

GW Yes, the young generation.

CP **So, that's why you are interested in promoting the language... the young generation does not speak a good Gikuyu, especially in towns...**

GW Yes. Young people use foreign words instead of their mother tongue...

CP **Yes, a lot of young people use, for instance, words like <u>gucenjia</u>...**

GW Yes, gucenjia, from the English "to change". And some people are happy, you see, they say that it's good because we are adding new words... but it is not a good idea... how can you add this way?

CP **You already have the verb in Gikuyu, so why should you borrow the same word from another language?**

GW Yes, you see, "to change" in Gikuyu is kuhururura, now, if we say gucenjia, it doesn't come... You see, people don't sit and consider things, I mean, especially these young Gikuyu singers. They just say anything that comes to their minds, without caring about the language, without thinking that people will learn their songs and learn the wrong word or expression. The language doesn't matter to them.

CP **I read in your diary that you had a course in short story writing when you were in detention...**

GW Yes, it was the Regent Institute in Europe. You know, very few people were allowed to receive courses. I had a course in journalism and short story writing, but after one or two lessons decided to give up journalism and concentrate on short story writing. Some other people were taking other subjects.

CP **Do you think the course was useful?**

GW Oh yes, very useful, because I had time, I had nothing to do, you see. So I read and then I answered all the questions and wrote short stories as required. At that time I even wrote some short stories and sent them to Baraza, the newspaper in Kiswahili, and they paid me [laughs]. And the other detainees were surprised: "Hey, Gakaara! You are doing business while you're sitting idle!" [laughs]

CP **For how long did you receive your course?**

GW It was only until I left Manda Island Detention Camp, when I went to other places I didn't carry on. I didn't even do exams. It was only for about two years. But I benefitted a lot.

CP **Was this Regent Institute in London?**

GW In London, yes. I think it is still there...

CP **I'd like to know more about your book on psychological problems or "self-created diseases". You published parts of it in other books and recently collected them in one book [Mirimu ya Kwiigirira, Self-Created Diseases]. How did you get the idea of writing about psychology?**

GW This is only a translation of the discussions we were having in detention camps. You know, there was somebody from the coast, somebody called Chokwe, and he was giving

this course (laughs). Sometimes we were giving lectures, you see. Somebody said: "OK, let's have somebody stand and tell us what he knows, you see, and then we discuss...". Because, you see, we were idle, we were doing nothing, so we liked talking and we liked Chokwe talking about the fact that everybody had got a disease (laughs): "If you want to say something, but you are not able to say it, you have got a disease (laughs)... You see, you feel ashamed in front of such and such a person, but they are not even thinking about you, it's you..." (laughs). That was how we learnt... it was interesting... Then, when I was released and I was in Nairobi, somebody came and told me: "Can you remember what Chokwe said? Why don't you write a book?" He had taken some notes. "Can you remember everything now?" he asked. "Yes", I said. So we sat down together and wrote out. He was not a Gikuyu that one, you see, he was a Giriama. He became an MP... I don't know what he does, I don't know where he is now. So, this is how I wrote it... People talked about it a lot, about this psychology.

CP **Can you tell me more about the people who buy your books? I mean, are they peasants, clerks, school leavers...? You probably know who your readers are...**

GW Yes. These school leavers are the ones who buy my books, they are the ones who are interested in my books and buy them. When people are still at school, you know, they don't buy books, because they don't have any money. All their books are bought by their parents, and parents,

you see, usually have very little money. So I write for young people who like reading.

CP **Why did you decide to go on with the character of Wa-Nduuta? I mean, you wrote Ndugeta Ungi Maraya [Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute] and then you went on writing about wa-Nduuta. Why?**

GW You see, first of all I wanted to run a magazine. I wanted to run a monthly magazine, a general magazine, but it wouldn't do. I published a few issues, but people were saying: "But we have already read all that in the daily newspapers!" So I thought it couldn't succeed. I had written Ngwenda Unjurage [I Want You to Kill Me] and Ndugeta Ungi Maraya [Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute] and I had seen that people were interested in such stories, so I thought of a magazine where I could write these stories to attract them. At the same time, you see, there was another hidden, secret, reason: I wanted to advertise my books in my own magazine so that people would read the magazine and the advertisements in it and that would reduce my costs because I wouldn't have to advertise my books in The Standard or The Nation. That is why my books are very well known in Gikuyuland and not outside, you see, because they are only advertised in Gikuyu papers. At times I do advertise them in national daily newspapers...

CP **What do you think of wa-Nduuta?**

GW Well, you see, there are some people who call me wa-Nduuta [laughs]: "Hey, wa-Nduuta!" [laughs]

CP **Do you like wa-Nduuta?**

GW I like him because he acts without thinking... they say wa-Nduuta does things and gets into trouble every time. I say: "Yes, but I write what **you** do". What people do, and that's what wa-Nduuta does", you see.

CP **Can we say wa-Nduuta is the man of the street?**

GW Oh yes, wa-Nduuta is the man of the street. Have you read book number two [Wa-Nduuta Akigura Mwari, Wa-Nduuta Married His Daughter]?

CP **The one about the daughter... yes.**

GW People were asking me: "How do you consider his sins?". Some people wondered: "A person who wants to marry his daughter!" But they [wa-Nduuta and his daughter] didn't know they were father and daughter, they didn't know each other!

CP **What did you want to teach through this story?**

GW Town life. When you live in town, you have to be very, very careful, you see. According to Gikuyu customs, you see, you can't just go and marry a girl like that. You must ask her: "What is your clan? Where do you come from?"

and so on. Wa-Nduuta and his daughter didn't ask each other such questions, they just loved each other. So I wanted to teach that this might happen if you don't follow the Gikuyu customs.

Even when a girl makes friends with a boy, the boy goes home and says: "I fell in love with that girl and I want to marry her". Now the parents have to study the clan of that girl, they have to know. There are clans which do not intermarry [laughs]. They would say: "That clan? Oh no, no, no! [laughs] You can't marry a girl from that clan! Not that one! Go to another side [laughs], go and look for another one! That one you cannot marry!". But now these customs are disappearing, you see.

CP **Do you think that the moral is important in your stories?**

GW Yes, very important. Every, every, wa-Nduuta story has got a teaching. You must read them and come out with something, with the teaching. That's why young people like them so much, you see. There are some who behave like you, there are some who don't want to miss a copy!

CP **So, according to you, the teaching is the most important aspect of your stories?**

GW Yes, the teaching. And the Gikuyu customs.

CP **In your stories you always stress the importance of proper talk and proper behaviour...**

GW Yes, always, proper talk, proper behaviour, always proper things to do...

CP I noticed that many of your stories take place in a bus or in a matatu. Why is travelling so important in your stories?

GW Travelling? I don't know! [laughs] I've never thought about that [laughs]... Maybe because people talk when they are travelling... because people who do not know each other, especially men and women, don't have many chances of talking. Gikuyu men and women don't sit together to discuss, you know. This is the only reason I can think of... I've never thought about it... I never knew... it's you who told me for the first time. Many stories take place in a bus?

CP Yes. I think that one of the reasons why your stories take place in the bus is that you want some people to witness the events that you are narrating. The occasional passengers in a bus are the "best" audience you can find because they are there by chance and they meet the characters for the first time, they are like people in a court of law... it seems to me that for you it's very important to have an audience within the story, I mean, people who watch the events impartially ...

GW Yes, some people who watch the story, so that the truth can come out...

CP **I'd like to ask you a question about Joseph Kamaru, the singer. Do you think that you and Kamaru have a similar aim in your work? In promoting Gikuyu culture, for instance...**

GW I see... His first song, he copied it from my book. I told him would show him [laughs]... He said he didn't know: "It was an Indian who told me he sang that song", he said. And when I said: "I'm going to show you both..."[laughs]. They had made a lot of money. I told Kamaru: "Now, you have to pay me". And he said: "But I have no money [laughs]... I was only paid something like three hundred shillings by that Indian, and then he ran away!" Oh my God! [laughs] So I gave up.

Now, the thing is that Kamaru is good, only he is not educated. He's gifted at singing. I can't say that he copies me because he sings about Gikuyu customs and traditions and all that; and even the other things he talks about in his songs... But there's no relationship between the two of us.

Like this collection [Nyimbo cia Mau Mau, Mau Mau Songs], you see. Kamaru came here with these Mau Mau songs, and some songs were the ones I composed in 1951-1952... so I told him: "And you have done all this alone!" [laughs] He said: "But these were brought to me by the former Mau Mau general, Mwariama! That Meru man, he's the one who brought me these songs!" [laughs] I told him: "Yes, you are right. There are **some** which are Mwariama's...". You see, he was one of the last Mau Mau fighters to leave the forest. You know, some songs were

composed in the forest... by that time we were not there, we were in detention camps. When the war came... I did not fight the Mau Mau war myself, many politicians did not, you know... So there are songs they composed in the forest and there were songs we composed in detention camps. Some people were composing songs whilst in prison, you see; and there are songs we composed in 1951-1952 before we were arrested. These are the ones we called "awakening songs", the "awakening songs", you see. But some of the "awakening songs" had been sung since 1948. In the collection I published the songs are divided into three groups: songs from 1948 to 1951, or KAU songs; songs from 1952 to 1960, composed in prisons, in detention camps and in the forest; and songs from 1961 to 1964, or KANU songs. But now that Kamaru, you see, thought they are all Mau Mau songs...

CP **Do you think Kamaru wants to teach a moral through his songs?**

GW I wouldn't know... He comes here, yes, and we talk; like the other day, you see, he came and asked me: "What am I going to do?" Because his songs were not doing well... Did you know he has brought out a cassette of Mau Mau songs?

CP **Yes, the cassette contains part of the Mau Mau songs you published in your** <u>Nyimbo cia Mau Mau</u> **[Mau Mau Songs]...**

GW I told him he can advertise the cassette in my book... But now, whether he has got the idea of teaching other people a certain moral, you see, I wouldn't know...

CP Why did you choose to write in Gikuyu?

GW Because I write only stories or I only deal with subjects concerning the Gikuyu. Some people ask me why I don't translate my books. But nobody who is not a Gikuyu would be interested in them, let alone somebody like you who has a particular interest.

CP Are you interested in reaching other Kenyan peoples?

GW No, not very much, because, people know me as a specialist in Gikuyu.

CP And you want to be that...

GW Yes.

CP Are you only interested in the Gikuyu people?

GW Not only the Gikuyu people, the Gikuyu language as well. I'm interested in teaching how to write it properly, the spelling and so on.

CP Wa-Nduuta travels around Gikuyu land and he often stays in Nairobi where there are so many other tribes, but he only meets other Gikuyu. Why? You don't think that a

person from another tribe would also make a good character for your stories?

GW I don't know. What you are telling me is new to me. When I was writing I didn't think about wa-Nduuta meeting only Gikuyu people. Is that so?

CP Yes. Wherever he goes he only meets other Gikuyu.

GW Maybe when he goes to the police, for instance, he meets other peoples, but I report their dialogues in Gikuyu.

CP But their names, when you specify them, are always Gikuyu names!

GW [laughs] There is also something else... I don't want to write something that might dissatisfy my readers. I don't want to write in another language and have to consult a dictionary. And I want to write about the people I know.

CP **I think that indirectly you are also doing something for the other ethnic groups because you are encouraging people to write in their own languages.**

What do you think of other popular writers like David Maillu who writes in English and Kikamba?

GW I've never met him. I've never given him credit as a writer.

CP Have you read Mangua's Son of Woman? I think the main character resembles wa-Nduuta...

GW No, I haven't read that book. But when one writes people can copy from you, of course.

CP Do you think there are any similarities between your writings and Ngugi's?

GW No. I don't think so. Our Gikuyu is also different. You know, there is a difference between Nyeri's Gikuyu and Kiambu's. Our style is also very different. I can't see any similarities.

Some teachers were telling me that Ngugi's books for children are good, they are good for their growth, because [the protagonist] Njamba Nene ["great hero"] is a great hero... Ngugi wants to teach our children to be as great as Njamba Nene, he tries to teach Gikuyu children to be big people. This is what some teachers told me and, you know, teachers have got ideas. But they found my primers more useful. Ngugi stories are not textbooks.

In my primers I use a lot of vocabulary and the teachers find it very useful, they are looking for it because some of them are young. They say: "This book is going to help us because it teaches us something. Now we have something to think about, we didn't think of that word, we didn't know it".

CP So your writings help them to find the proper Gikuyu words or expressions.

GW Yes.

CP Do you think the young generations find it difficult to read Gikuyu and your Gikuyu in particular?

GW: Yes. They say it is hard, even young teachers say so.

CP They find it hard but useful.

GW Yes, that is why they are happy. They say: "Now I have something to do because when I teach a word, I think of a Swahili word. Instead of saying this is <u>maitu</u> ["mother"], I say <u>mama</u> ["mother" in Kiswahili], which is wrong". They often use Gikuyu words in the wrong context. I tell them: "You see, Gikuyu has got grammar, vocabulary, just like English". I tell them: "You must go to the villages, stay with your grandmother, and you'll learn". Some of them would like to write in Gikuyu, but they say they can't.

CP Do you think the young generation find it difficult to understand, not only the language you use, but also the traditional Gikuyu customs you are talking about in your books?

GW Yes. They like them, but they find them strange.

CP Wa-Nduuta has got two wives. Are you in favour of polygamy?

GW No. I just wanted to show how the Gikuyu married a second wife.

CP Do you still have troubles with the government?

GW Not long ago, the Special Branch people stayed here for one day, searching my office, looking at the issues of the magazine, asking questions. They don't want to renew my permit for publishing the magazine. But they will not stop me. I told them I cannot live without writing, without teaching my people.

APPENDIX 2: TRANSLATIONS OF SELECTED WRITINGS BY GAKAARA

2.1 I Want You to Kill Me (Ngwenda Unjurage) September 1951(1)

2.1.1 Preface(2)

Mr Gakaara asked me to tell the story of the girl who killed herself. A lot of people had heard about it and wanted to know how it ended and why the girl's fiancé had put a photograph on her bosom before she was buried, as she had asked in her letter to him. In this book you will read about their love, and the problems they had with her father who did not allow them to get married because he was demanding a large bridewealth.

The sadness started when her mother screamed when she saw her daughter's dead body hanging from a tree, and the girl's fiancé, in tears, read out her letter in front of the policeman. Her father was put on trial and, later on, he gave Nyokabi in marriage without asking for bridewealth.

I beg the readers not to ask for the names of the young man and the girl because the person who told this story did not want them to be mentioned. This person wants the story to be known so that young men and girls, and

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(1) The booklet was first published as Uhoro wa Ugurani (The Story of a Marriage) in 1946. Gakaara revised it before publishing it in 1951. It has been reprinted several times (see 11.2).

(2) The text of the preface is unclear and it is understood only after reading the story.

their parents as well, may learn about love and understand how marriage can cause sorrow, if it is not properly arranged.

You are going to feel sad reading this story, but, after finishing it, you will probably rejoice.

Miss M.J. Watare(3)

2.1.2 I Want You to Kill Me

How Can You Not Be Moved by What Was Done by This Girl?

The Girl Decides to Elope with Her Boyfriend Without the Consent of Her Parents

The girl and the young man had been in love for a long time here in Gikuyuland and they had vowed to marry and spend their lives together. When the time came, the young man went to the girl's father, according to Gikuyu customs. And when the father heard that the young man, who had fallen in love with his daughter, was very wealthy, he said that the girl would cost him a lot(4) and that he did not think the young man would be able to marry her(5). The

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(3) Mary J. Watare is one of Gakaara's sisters. In the 1966 edition two photographs appear on this page, one of Gakaara's, above the caption "the publisher of this booklet", and the other of his sister, above the caption "the narrator of this story".

(4) My translation reflects the confusion in the Gikuyu original in the use of personal pronoums.

(5) The sentence means: "the elder teased the young man by saying that he could not afford marrying his daughter, knowing that the young man was very wealthy".

reason for his saying this was that he was planning to ask him for a very large bridewealth.

Because of the love he felt for the girl, the young man accepted to do whatever the elder asked. He agreed to start bringing the bridewealth, but he was not told how much he was supposed to bring. So he started paying bridewealth and doing all the things the Gikuyu do when arranging a marriage, but when he brought goats or money, he was never told that he had paid enough because "family ties have no limits"(6).

One day the young man counted all the cattle and money that he had taken to the elder and found that they were very a lot, about three thousand shillings worth in all. For this reason he went to his father-in-law to be and asked to be allowed to take the girl. He told the elder that he would not see another single thing because what remained was needed for arranging the wedding and for his daughter's expenses when she went to her [new] home. After that, the young man did not bring anything else to the elder.

When the elder heard that, he did not even think of compromising, but kept on asking for more goods, and refused to give him the girl in marriage. After that, the young man met the girl he wanted to marry and tried to show her that her father did not have at heart her welfare after their marriage. The girl could see it was true,

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(6) Uthoni nduri muhaka: Gikuyu saying literally meaning "family ties have no boundaries". The word uthoni means "state of being related by marriage", "relationship with the family of a man and that of his wife".

especially as she knew how many things her father had received from him. For this reason, the girl went to her father and begged him to allow her to marry her fiancé, but her father refused, cursed her, and told her that her opinion was not wanted and she could only wait until he allowed her to marry(7).

Because of the love she bore for her fiancé, and even more because she could see that her father had been given a lot, she got angry about being cursed and at about being prevented from marrying her fiancé for no good reason. So, she packed all her belongings, went to the young man and told him to take her as if she were his wife and to live with her, whether married or not.

The young man did not like quarrelling and was a very peace-loving man. Although he loved the girl very much, he saw that it was not good to elope with her without her parents' consent. Although she did not agree with him, he tried to show her that, if her parents got annoyed and afterwards took him to court, this would create ill-feelings between him and her parents. For this reason he took her by the hand and walked her slowly back to her father's home and then went back to his home. The girl felt death in her heart because, although she had tried to convince him a lot of times, she had failed and could not bear it, not even a little. So, she went to her father and said to him: "Father, I believe that I love that young man

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(7) For a father to curse his children was an extremely serious act. The elder's reaction is completely out of place here and his uncorrect behaviour will cause his daughter's death.

very much and I don't think I can love any other man on this earth as I love him. My heart is sick because you're preventing me from marrying him and I can't see that you realize how much he has given you for me. Moreover, you seem to forget that the young man has given you all he has for you to enjoy by yourself, while I have to go and live with him in poverty. I beg you to let me marry him and afterwards he'll keep on bringing what is owed little by little, according to the Gikuyu custom(8).

When the elder heard that, he simply took a stick and beat his daughter and locked her in the house, so that she could not go to the young man again.

Two days later the young man went to his father-in-law to be and begged him a second time to agree to let him marry the girl, but the elder refused completely. The young man got so angry that he asked him to give him back everything he had given, big and small(9), together with what he had spent on the girl(10). After what had happened the elder did not refuse. He counted all the stock and money, took it back to the young man and told him that he could keep it for good. He said that he was so rich that those things were nothing to him.

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(8) Starting from the day of the betrothal the bridewealth was paid gradually.

(9) Kanini na kanene: literally "small and big", meaning the calves and the cows or the kids and the goats.

(10) The young man wants his cattle back and he wants to be refunded for what he had spent on his fiancée. It is not clear why he wants to be refunded for the personal gifts he had given her.

The young man went home and then left on a journey to Nairobi where he bought a lot of things. Then he opened a big shop near his village and bought a motorbike for riding. He was so angry about not being allowed to marry the girl, whom he loved so much, that he swore never to marry until the day he died.

The Girl Bids Farewell to Her Beloved

When the girl saw all this, she felt very bad about it and began to despise herself and feel that she was worthless since everything had happened because of her. Her heart was broken and she was in tears all the time. She lost weight because she ate nothing and stayed all day shut in the house into her sorrow. One day, in the evening, she had evil thoughts, and she went to her father and mother and, in great anger, said to her father: "I've come to you now and I want you to kill me because you consider me worthless. Father, do you know, father, it's me, your daughter whom you considered a worthless thing in front of the community? Now I'm gossiped about(11) and there's no man who'll ever want me again. I implored you again and again to let me marry the young man I've always loved and you refused. You cursed and beat me only for asking you. You have shown me and shown me very clearly that you prefer wealth to me, that you have forgotten

(11) The verb used here is gucamba, "become the subject of defamatory talk". This will become one of the key words in Gakaara's later writings, usually opposed to gitiyo, "good reputation", see e.g. Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute.

about me. You've treated me not as if I were your own child, but as a wild animal and you have shamed me in front of my age group(12).

Now I look all bones and no flesh because my life is gone and my skin is like dust. I can raise my eyes neither to the sun's rising, nor its setting, nor hear one good word spoken of me by anybody here on earth. That's why I've come now to tell you that I'm going to leave you and you will lose me as well as that wealth you love more than my life(13).

I know that what I'm going to do will shock and anger many people and fill them with sorrow, but they'll understand it's your fault. I can't stand all the shame I feel when I see people happy, and especially when I remember my beloved who left me because of you. That's why I'm saying goodbye, take care of mother and Nyokabi".

Although the words the daughter said to her father were sorrowful, he never thought why it was she said all that, he only answered that, whatever she had in mind, she would not be able to do. The elder thought that his daughter wanted to go away somewhere, maybe to become a prostitute, and he believed that, if she did go away

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(12) Riika: single initiation or age-set, usually named after an outstanding event of the season, the names varying from district to district. The fact that the girl uses the word riika does not necessarily mean that she was circumcised and therefore she does not belong to a Christian family because the word can also be used to refer to the same year of birth (cf. Me and Nyarwimbo, Appendix 2.2, note 1).

(13) By losing his daughter the elder is also losing her bridewealth.

anywhere, he would be able to send somebody to bring her back home.

The girl's mother implored her husband to stop breaking their daughter's heart, but the elder would not listen. The girl went to bed, but she could not sleep because of the anxiety in her heart and she could not stop weeping. It was a night of great torment for the girl, as you know that when death approaches, it is a very great event, especially if a person is wanting to commit suicide out of anger.

She went to bed and waited for everybody in the house to go to sleep and, when they were asleep, she got up, took pen and paper and wrote this letter to her beloved:

My darling,

My hands tremble when I remember that you are the one I am writing this letter to. I want to thank you for having loved me for so long, and because you always made me happy. I am not ashamed of telling you that my heart has loved you more than anybody else here on earth, and I beg you to remember me all your life.

I know that it is not your fault that I am committing this sin because I have seen how you did your utmost to let us live together, but you did not succeed because you were prevented. You have come to reject all women because of me and I implore you to forgive for the harm I have done to you. I WILL NEVER SEE AGAIN, NOR EAT FOOD AGAIN, BUT DARLING FORGIVE ME IF YOU CAN.

I implore you to come to the place where I am buried and to bring the photograph of you which was taken in Libya and, when the time comes for me to be buried, place the photograph on my bosom, so that I may be buried with your image.

May God make your life happy in your time here on earth.

Farewell

The one who has loved you dearly

She wrote many other letters to her friends and she wrote that all her things were to be given to her sister, who was younger than her and was called Nyokabi(14). After doing that, she opened the door slowly and went out to hang herself in the middle of the night, when everybody was asleep.

All those letters were found in the pocket of the dress she was wearing and her dead body was found hanging from a tree at the gate of their homestead very early in the morning.

It Was Her Mother Who First Saw Her

Since women get up very early in the morning, the girl's mother was up very early. When she went oudside, she saw that the gate of the homestead was not closed. She felt very much afraid(15) because she thought that thieves might have opened it, for this reason she looked at the cattle enclosure and saw that all the cows were still

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(14) The story is clearly set among Christian converts. In fact, in Gikuyu traditional society, a woman could not possess anything.

(15) We ni atuikire nda: literally "she felt a sharp pain in her stomach" (as though she had been stabbed), meaning "she was extremely frightened".

there. She then looked at her granaries and saw that none of them had been opened. Only after that, did she go on, still feeling frightened because her heart told her that something terrible had happened with a presentiment felt all through her body.

When she reached the gate, I cannot say what it was like, because when she looked around and saw her daughter's corpse hanging from a tree, she stood like someone who had gone mad(16).

She screamed loudly and mournfully, as if her throat had been cut, and because of the shock and the violent trembling brought on by fear, she could go neither forward nor back. So, she fell down just where she was like somebody who had fainted. She lay there on the ground, weeping and saying: "Can anybody tell me if it's her? Because I'll be dead before night! Oh, can she really be dead?" And she said other sad things like the phrases you hear when a death occurs, and especially in the case of a death like that which had happened unexpectedly.

When the elder heard his wife's screams, he rushed out of his hut(17) but, before reaching the place where his wife was, he already knew that something sad had happened because he could hear what his wife was saying

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(16) Aikarire ta mundu wagia na mbugugu mutwe: literally "she stayed (there) like a person who was out of her mind". This expression is used when somebody receives a great shock and looks as if he or she was mad, but actually is not.

(17) Thigira: hut reserved for the use of men, built inside the entrance to the homestead with the cattle enclosure on the same side outside the entrance.

with a lot of tears and wailing. At the same time their daughter Nyokabi arrived and she was so shocked that she could not walk properly, her limbs were too weak and her heart was beating too fast.

What was even worse was that, when the elder saw his daughter hanging from the tree and understood that she was really dead and, moreover, when he remembered the words that she had said to him the preceding evening, before they went to bed, a big tear rolled down his cheek and he said aloud: "Wasn't it me who made her do this?"(18) He shook his head and he dropped the panga he was holding, without his noticing it in his state of shock(19).

He walked on tiptoe solwly and shuffling, shaking all over as he kept his eyes on the corpse and, when he got near, he stopped and examined the body, sweat pouring like water off his body and his face distorted with the grief and shock that had befallen him, especially because of thinking and knowing that he was responsible for that death. He did not touch the girl and, when Nyokabi went near the corpse, he told her not to touch it(20).

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(18) The punctuation of this passage is extremely loose. Although I tried to respect the original I wanted the text to be clear and, for this reason, the English translation is smoother than the Gikuyu original.

(19) He probably took a panga (in Gikuyu ruhiu, "cultivating knife") with him because, on hearing his wife screaming, he thought she had been attacked.

(20) The Gikuyu believed that to touch a corpse would cause ritual pollution, but, in this case, the elder told his daughter not to touch it because they had to wait for the police.

By that time Nyokabi could not be held because every time she raised her eyes and saw her sister's corpse there on the tree, she rolled about on the ground like a young donkey(21), weeping loudly and even trying to tear her dress. Nyokabi and her mother knew in their hearts that this had happened because the girl had been prevented from marrying the young man who was her fiancé. Therefore they did not want to look at the elder because they really hated him at that moment.

By that time the people of the village, having heard the screams and loud weeping, had arrived. There is nobody who does not know that the news of a death like that is very sad, and therefore, when people arrived, young men and women, the elders, the women and children, and especially the girl's friends, they were all crying copiously. There was nobody from that village who asked why the girl had hung herself because they all knew and some ad even seen with their own eyes what had happened between the girl and her father and the young man who was her fiancé.

The women and the girls, by weeping copiously, made the homestead and the whole village even sadder. Some sympathetic men tried to help and comfort the girl's mother and Nyokabi, especially because they had heard the woman saying that she wanted to kill herself. So they looked after her to prevent her from doing such a thing.

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(21) Young donkeys like to roll about on the ground. This is one of the very few lively similes to be found in this story.

What people were eager to know was whether there was something bad like a dying curse or a taboo the girl had cast on her family, but nothing could be determined at that moment(22). Nyokabi tried to find out whether there were some notes she had left in her boxes, but she could not find a single note about what had happened.

Her Fiancé Finds Out

The village where the girl's fiancé lived was on another ridge not very far away. That very morning a young man from the girl's village, who was a friend of that young man who was to marry, went very fast to his friend's house to tell him everything that had happened, as soon as he saw the girl's corpse. When the young man heard the news, he felt a grief he had never had since his birth. When after a while he finished his reflection, he said these words: "If only the girl were still alive, so that I could see her, even if she were not mine! Now my grief is bigger than before because I feel as if I had died too. I don't know whether I'll ever be happy in my life because my eyes won't bear the sight of her [dead body]".

At this point his voice began to come out with difficulty because of his regret and he said: "It would have been better if I had agreed to live with that girl when she came to me because now she would be alive. I feel

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(22) The sentence is not clear. Maybe it simply means "they could not find anything written" (cf. following sentence).

bad because my fear and foolishness made me take her back to her father. It would have been better if he had taken me to court for eloping with her because now she would be alive".

Then he was overwhelmed by grief, he took a handkerchief from his pocket and began to cry and asked that young man, who was his friend, to forgive him because he could not hold it back.

That young man, his friend, tried to console him, showing him for instance that it was not his fault if the young woman had killed herself because she was angry with her father.

But the prospective bridegroom would not listen to any good argument(23) that the fault was not his, since then he could see that he had broken the heart of his beloved when he had taken her back to her father, although the girl had given him the power of life and death over her, he said: "It would have been better if I had been jailed till my death and she would have been alive".

Then his heart told him that it would be better if he went to see the body of his beloved before she was buried and for this reason he set out on foot towards where the body was.

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(23) Kihoto: "good argument", one of the key words in Gakaara's later writings (cf. e.g. Me and Nyarwimbo, Appendix 2.2).

How the Letters Were Found

The people of the government who lived in Gikuyuland passed the information to the police as soon as it became known that the girl committed suicide and for this reason the policemen came very quickly, as it is their custom, in order to investigate the reason why that girl had committed suicide. When they arrived, they saw the girl's father sitting on the ground, there at the bottom of the tree, moaning. He would not let even one person touch the body till the policemen arrived and said that it had to be taken town from the tree.

At that moment all the people, even those who were inside the house, gathered there near the tree so that they could listen to what the policemen said. When she was taken down, the policemen searched the dress that she was wearing and it was then that the letters she had written were found.

The policemen refused to give the letters to the addressees. First they wanted to know all the people who were mentioned because in those letters there might be some important information for the investigations. After the policemen had read all the letters privately, they called the girl's parents to one side so that they could be told the story. They also wanted to know that young man who was the girl's fiancé because the whole story was told in his letter.

The parents could not give the whole story because of fear, particularly the elder because he knew that it was his fault and he repeatedly tried to hide the truth,

although he could not because the whole story was revealed in the letter.

The senior officer among those policemen was an Inspector and he was a Gikuyu. Since he was the one who had that letter he said that he wanted to see the young man whom that letter was addressed to and for this reason Nyokabi and one policeman went to the young man's place in order to bring him there. They had not gone far when they met that young man with the other one who had gone to tell him the news, and so they all came back together.

When they arrived where the body and all the people were, the young man did not speak to anybody, but he only went up to the inspector and told him: "I've been told that you wanted to see me and I'm here now. I heard that something terrible had happened and I was coming to find out what happened even without being told".

The inspector asked the young man: "Do you know this girl who committed suicide?"

The young man answered: "Yes, I know her very, very well because I was the one who wanted to marry her a little time ago".

When the inspector looked at the young man and heard his respectful words, he could understand that the young man was helpful. He told him this: "This is a bad moment for all the people who know the reason why this happened, and, in my view, you are one of those people who can tell us the reason why this girl committed suicide". Then the inspector took out the letter which had been written by the girl and gave it to the young man telling him: "Read

this letter and tell me whether it is yours and whether you know the story contained in it".

The young man took the letter and began to read it, at the same time concentrating on each word he read, and, as those words sank deeply into his heart, he was overcome by great grief and his hands began to tremble and his whole body with them. What gave him a great grief was the fact that the girl asked him to forgive her because he had sworn never to marry because of her.

What shocked him most was the part about the photograph. The young man read that the girl who had died and whose body he could see covered there on the ground in front of him, had written that she wanted his photograph placed on her bosom, so that she could be buried with his image. He burst into tears, moving the heart of those who were watching him. He made many people even sadder and some wept out of sympathy for the young man, because they saw how his heart was heavy with grief. Many of them asked themselves: "Oh, what has he been told in that letter?". Even the girl's father, seeing what sympathy people felt for the young man, thought to himself: "Does it mean this young man loved the girl so much?". Then he began to hate himself, even more because he had not agreed for his daughter to be married to that young man, who was her fiancé.

At the time also the inspector felt such a sympathy that he could not go on with the investigations. He kept silent for a while looking down, then he asked the young man to give him the letter back and told those people who were there: "I've never seen a love as great as this. It's

true that this young man has got great suffering in his heart because he has lost his girlfriend in such a way, and since there are many people who want to know what this young man was told by his girlfriend, I'll beg you to listen attentively while I read you this letter, because there is no secret in it. I want you to listen to it with your own ears, so that you can judge this case in your hearts, each one of you, from the words of this young woman". Then the inspector read that letter with a voice full of sorrow and the people knew what they wanted to know.

After that the inspector said that that young man, the girl's father and mother and their daughter Nyokabi would go to testify in front of the judge because it is the custom of the police to know and to investigate the reason why a person commits suicide. He said that if a person was abused by another person and, out of anger, the one who had been abused later on committed suicide and if later on there is enough evidence that he or she did so because he or she was abused, the one who abused him or her could be prosecuted by the government. It was also not good to commit suicide because if a person was found while trying to commit suicide and was rescued, he or she too could be prosecuted. Likewise the girl must have suffered so much that she thought of committing suicide out of anger and great grief. He advised the crowd that it was not good for somebody to commit suicide because he or she would leave a lot of problems to his or her friends and bring very painful grief to their hearts.

When the inspector was saying those words, the young man who was the girl's fiancé asked: "Can I be allowed to go and fetch that photograph, so that I can respect what my beloved wanted?"

The inspector answered: "Yes, I'll give you a policeman to go with you to fetch that photograph of you which was taken in Libya".

After a little while, when the young man came back, the body had been taken to the hospital to be examined by the doctors, as is usually done. After that, the girl's father and all her relatives, together with the young man who was her fiancé, made arrangements for the burial. The young man contributed the money to make a very expensive coffin and the body was carried in it, and people went to the place of burial to bury her. All the people who had heard the news of that girl's death went to the place of burial and they were a big crowd, and many of them were carrying flowers, with endless sorrow.

When all the things for the burial had been prepared by the religious people, everybody watched the young man open the coffin and then take out the photograph from his coat-pocket and place it on the bosom of the corpse of his beloved together with a wreath of beautiful flowers. Meanwhile there was not even a person who blinked. Then he closed the coffin slowly and said looking to the crowd: "I've fulfilled my duty. May God set her in a good place".

The girl's relatives, helped by that young man and other young men, picked up the coffin and slowly lowered it into the grave. She was buried with great respect and

the flowers left there by her friends were like a large and beautiful mound.

The Elder Is Jailed

In the court of law the day of the trial there was no room to stand because there were many people who had come to listen to the case. The news of the girl's suicide had spread to many places in a short time, because the story had been immediately reported in the newspapers.

The trial did not last long because everything was clear and all the witnesses agreed to give full testimony without hiding anything. For this reason, after the police had accused the girl's parents and also the young man, the judge discussed the case with justice for four days and on the fifth day he judged the case, saying this: "This is a good case. I haven't seen such a case recently in which people are in agreement. I don't know whether many people here in Gikuyuland know about love and how, when it enters into the heart of a woman who loves a man, it makes her act like a fool. I've judged people from different ethnic groups in cases like this involving love, such as girls and young men who killed other people or committed suicide, or were involved in big fights, or bewitched others, or made others go to jail, or gave false testimony in order to smear the reputation of other people and so on. So far the Gikuyu haven't done very big things because of love and for this reason what this girl shocked many people.

According to my investigations in this case, I understand that the girl committed suicide because her heart was broken by being prevented from marrying this young man. I could not see enough reasons that it was the girl's fault because in her letter to her beloved the girl said that it wasn't his fault if she committed suicide. For this reason, I cannot find him guilty.

What makes me happy in judging this case, is that the girl's mother and her daughter Nyokabi have given enough evidence to show that the girl was beaten and even cursed by her father and also locked in the house so that she couldn't go to see the young man who was her beloved. I've also asked Gikuyu elders who saw the things that the young man paid for marrying the girl and I found that the elder had no goood reason for saying that the things, to the value of Shs. 3,000 were not enough for bridewealth according to the custom of the Gikuyu".

Then the judge looked at the girl's father and told him: "You, elder, I don't know whether you realized that you were breaking your daughter's heart or not, but even if you didn't, now I see that you've come to understand that you were a big fool. I'm not ashamed to tell you that we can't allow elders like you to break their children's heart because you want to enrich yourselves with this business of bridewealth. An elder like you with no mercy in him deserves to be killed, so that he won't be seen here on earth to make his daughter commit suicide by causing her such a great pain, and for no reason. You've made many people very angry and for this reason I see that I have the right to punish you as severely as I can.

This is the first case of the sort to appear here in this court in this part of Gikuyuland and since I can see your great foolishness and that you are not very old, I'll imprison you for six years hard labour, so that you'll learn a lesson and understand that you have sinned and also so that other elders who have hearts like yours, will learn from you. I should have sentenced you to life-imprisonment because I have the power to do so, but I'll be merciful with you because this is the first case of the sort in this part of the country. The others, the young man, your wife, and also your daughter can go. I've found them not guilty".

Then the policemen got hold of the elder and he was placed in a guard room(24) to wait to be taken to the big prison.

Nyokabi Is the One Who Was Married by the Young Man

When the elder had been escorted to prison, some people spoke like this: "Let him face the consequences. I begged him not to give back the things that the young man had given him and he told me to marry off my own daughter and leave him in charge of his. He who ignores advice ends up in trouble(25). Now, as you can see, his daughter is in

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(24) Kandurumu: "guard room"; rumu from the English "room", to which the prefix ka- for the diminuitive class was added.

(25) Murega Akiiruo Ndaregaga Akihetwo: proverb literally meaning "he who ignores advice does not resist when being .../

the grave and he had to give those things he wanted so much back to the owner. He lost four by chasing eight(26). Let him stay in jail and age there. When he gets out, it will only be to die. Oh, it is really a great sorrow". Such conversations lasted for about six months and then people forgot.

Nyokabi and her mother went back home in great sorrow and anxiety, as they had never thought that their elder would be given such a sentence. They thought that he would have been given something light like one month's imprisonment. They were left in sorrow for a number of days, but because of being comforted and helped by that young man who loved their girl who had committed suicide, they were relieved by their sorrow. That young man became like the head of the family because he never let them suffer even a bit of hardship during the whole time the elder was in jail.

He bought them dresses and also gave them all the assistance they needed. He also did something big because he helped the elder who was in prison, saying that all the elder's food should come from him(27). Moreover, he agreed with the prison authorities that the elder be given the light work of washing dishes. For this reason the elder

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prepared for burial". On this proverb, see also 16 Ways of Loving our translation.

(26) Akiuritwo ni inya aratiriire inyanya: (proverb) "he lost four by chasing eight", or "he who grasps too much, holds nothing fast".

(27) Probably in the sense that the young man provided for the elder's food which was taken to him by the two women.

did not suffer serious hardship during his imprisonment. His wife and daughter often went to visit him there in prison.

After a period of more or less one year Nyokabi went to work in the shop of that young man and because of the things the young man did for her to make her happy, she fell deeply in love with him and loved him so much that the young man came to realize it and to love her too, but he did not want to show her that he also loved her. Nyokabi was in charge of the shop and she lived with him as if she were his wife(28).

When the elder got out of prison, he was very happy about the generosity of that young man, and for this reason he thought about what he could do to please him. He invited the young man to his home and slaughtered a ram for him, and while they were eating he told him: "Now, I'm old and my days are numbered. During my youth I thought that people always had to do what I said. Even not long ago, when I was older, and I was living like a leader. I was never contradicted by people of my age group. A brave warrior falls with another(29). Since my daughter died, you've never abandoned us, and you've done something for which I can't thank you enough.

Also the girl's mother wants you to know that she's been very pleased with you and when I got out of jail she

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(28) The author prefers not to go into detail and is rather vague.

(29) Njamba iguaga na ingi: proverb literally meaning "a brave warrior falls with another" or "he who lives by the sword will perish by the sword".

told me what she thought of you and her ideas match mine. That's why we have invited you, so that we can tell you our idea: let Nyokabi be yours. I bless you. From you I don't want anything that has a hole(30), or anything that bleats or moos.

The mother said: "Take her, father(31), and hold her with both hands(32) because we have nothing more to say".

The young man tried to protest a little, but when he objected he could see that this would mean trouble and after being pressed he said: "I want to hear what Nyokabi has to say".

Nyokabi said: "This is what I lived to hear and I want to be yours with all my heart. So let it be as my parents wish".

Then the young man agreed to accept her with great love and told her: "I've broken my vow because of you and I love you with great respect(33) because what has been in your heart has been in mine too". They got married a little later and lived in great happiness and loved each other even without the payment of money or goats. Nowadays

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(30) In the general sense of "money", since in the forties coins had a central hole.

(31) Baba: "(my) father". A woman addresses as baba all her daughters' husbands, as they are the actual or potential fathers of grandsons who would be named after her husband and whom she would address as murume wakwa, "my husband", because they have inherited her husband's name.

(32) Meaning "welcome her warmly".

(33) The young man sees the break of his vote as positive. The reason is not clear as both traditional Gikuyu and Christian beliefs condemn the breaking of vows.

they have enough children and there is nobody who is richer than they are.

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK(34)

THE END

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(34) Matthew 5:5. Gakaara quotes from the Beatitudes also in If You Become a Christian... We'll Get Married (see Appendix 2.3).

2.2 Me and Nyarwimbo
(Ni Nii Ndina Nyarwimbo)
December 1966

Open up Your Wallets!

"We're only taking people for Nairobi. We leave here and go straight there, so we're not going to take people who want to get out along the way".

It was the conductor of the bus called "Kaukuuo Bus Service(1)" who said that, addressing his words to two girls, Nyarwimbo and Gathoni, who had just boarded the bus. One of the two girls clicked her tongue in scorn and, although the conductor heard it, he kept quiet with a heavy heart.

The girls knew in their heart that one of them was not going to Nairobi, but they did not worry about the conductor's words and kept quiet waiting to see what would happen. They thought that they would be able to use their tongues to get around the conductor, as they had done with the conductors of other buses.

Nyarwimbo was a pretty, plump girl and she was not very tall. She was decked out in the current fashion and, from her words, she seemed a bit aloof. Gathoni was not wearing fashionable clothes, but she looked as if they were the same age(2). Her face was cheerful.

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(1) Kauku: literally "there it goes". In Kenya each matatu (private vehicles for public transport) is given a name which is written on the vehicle itself.

(2) Riika: traditionally "initiation set", but used here

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When they got on the bus, Gathoni began to pass Nyarwimbo the luggage, a big leather suitcase, a basket full of clothes and a small decorated bag which contained some books and other small things. Nyarwimbo put all these things on the rack inside the bus, except for a small handbag, which looked really expensive.

They sat down together on a seat meant for three people and began talking in a low voice, leaning over as if they were preparing a secret plan.

At that time the "Kaukuuo" bus was parked at the Karatina bus station and it was about three in the afternoon. It was the last Sunday of the month, the day in which many workers from the town of Nairobi and other places, after bringing home their money, were going back to their jobs.

There were only a few buses for Nairobi left because many people wanted to go there at that time. Nobody wanted to be left behind and be late or not to get to work. For this reason people were boarding the bus in a jostling press of people.

While the conductor was showing the passengers where to sit, he shouted many times that he was not taking those people who wanted to get off along the way and he said that if somebody wanted to do so, he or she had to get out immediately. When he came to where Nyarwimbo and Gathoni sere sitting, he told them to make room so that another

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in the broader sense of "age" (cf. I Want You to Kill Me, Appendix 2.1).

person could sit there. They moved over and it was then that I sat down with them and thanked them.

At that point the conductor finished counting all the passengers who had a seat and he saw that there were no seats left. For this reason he said that all those who were standing had to get off, but some of them refused.

The conductor said: "Well, I'll teach you a new lesson. Now I'll stop treating you with respect and so I want everybody who is going to Nairobi, with no exceptions, to give me the money for the full fare right now. Even if somebody is going to Murang'a or Thika, they must pay the fare from Karatina to Nairobi. So open up your wallets!"

At this point Nyarwimbo and Gathoni understood that their plans were going to be spoilt because Gathoni was occupying that seat for Nyarwimbo's boyfriend. Gathoni was not going to Nairobi, but only as far as a secondary bus stop called Gatithi, about ten miles from Karatina. That's where they intended to carry out the secret plan the three of them had arranged. The third person would get on at Gatithi.

The girls discussed very quickly what to do and thought of a trick to make the bus stop there at Gatithi, so that their plan could be accomplished. Then Nyarwimbo called the conductor and told him in a very respectful way: "Listen, conductor, this girl here, who is a friend of mine, isn't going to Nairobi, but she's going to get off at Gatithi. There we're going to meet a woman who is waiting for us and she's the one I'm going to Nairobi with and..."

The conductor interrupted her and said, shaking his head: "That can't be done. I've repeated many times right here that I only wanted people who were going to Nairobi and you heard it, but didn't say anything. I heard you clicking your tongue and now I know the reason.

If your friend isn't going to Nairobi, she must get off right now so that another person can take her seat. If she's not getting off, she must pay the fare from here to Nairobi".

When the people who were standing heard this, they went to where the two girls were because they thought that Gathoni would get off. As soon as Nyarwimbo saw them closing in on that seat, she opened her purse, took 20 shillings and told the conductor: "Take the money. Take the money for two people, but when we reach Gatithi, stop the bus, so that this girl can get off and the woman who is waiting for us can get on and take her seat".

Will He Report Us?

Before the bus started off, a young man called Ndatheru, who came from the girls' village and was working selling cheap things there in Karatina, saw those two girls through the window and recognized them. He got on the bus and went straight to where the girls were, called them by name cheekily and told them in a very direct way: "Even if you're going to America or London, you must greet

Ndatheru and buy some sweets to moisten your lips and also some cheap handkerchiefs(3)".

The girls did not like Ndatheru's talk, and, moreover, they did not want him to know where they were going. He was very talkative, like someone drunk on beer, and he did not realize when he was saying unpleasant things in front of people. Although he joked in a nasty way, he did not mean any harm.

While he was taking out some sweets, he jokingly asked the tani boy(4): "You, young man, where are you taking these girls of ours to? Don't you know that I can have you arrested?" The tani boy answered jokingly: "They are going to work in Nairobi(5). Hey, can't you see their luggage? You can understand it's no trifling trip!"

At that point Ndatheru put his hand to his mouth and, looking at the girls, said: "Oh, so it isn't a joke that you're going away for good! Well! Just buy some sweets to

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(3) Ndatheru is joking about the attitude of those Kenyans who go to the States or Great Britain to study and, when they come back home, they feel so important that they no longer greet their old friends and acquaintances.

(4) Tani boy: tani comes from the English " " and the "tani boys" are the ones who put the passengers' luggage on the racks.

(5) In the sixties, when Gakaara wrote this story, young people began to leave their villages to go to work in Nairobi. The tani boy's statement is meant to amuse the readers who know that the luggage actually belongs only to Nyarwimbo. The girl "seems self-conscious" and is "decked out in fashionable clothes", so she is probably bringing with her so many dresses that, from the amount of luggage, the tani boy deduces that she is going for good.

suck on the way, maybe you'll come back with some little ones(6)".

Nyarwimbo, to get rid of him, gave him twenty cents and told him: "Give us some sweets and spare us your play-acting, Ndatheru". At that point the driver sounded the horn for departure and the seller of cheap things got off.

When the "Kaukuuo" bus had gone a little way, the two girls began to talk in a low voice and their faces were no longer very happy now, because Ndatheru had discovered their secret.

Ndatheru was a great friend of James, the young man who was Nyarwimbo's boyfriend, was of his same age and they used to exchange a lot jokes whenever they met.

Ndatheru was also a friend of Waigwa's, the young man who was Nyarwimbo's brother and they were really in good terms, though Waigwa was a bit older. Nyarwimbo was the first to speak and asked Gathoni: "Do you think that Ndatheru may go tell our parents that he saw us on this bus?"

Gathoni answered: "Oh, no! Don't worry about Ndatheru. His mind has been spoilt by this little business of his in cheap stuff which makes him shout all the time.

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(6) Again, although jokingly, Ndatheru is referring to a real problem since his function in this story is that of the jester, the half-wit who speaks the truth. In fact, numerous girls who went to try their luck in town, after some time came back to their village with a child. This is, even today, a burning issue in Kenya, where young unmarried women leave their children with their relatives in their home village and then go back to work in town.

He was selling things even to his own mother! He doesn't even remember to go home and sleeps there, in the market.

It would have been unfortunate if James had been in Karatina, because they would have started those jokes of theirs, till Ndatheru had discovered that it was James who had made up this secret plan".

Nyarwimbo stressed those words and said: "It's true. If Ndatheru had seen James with me on the same bus, you would have heard him announcing in front of everybody that we were going to get married in Nairobi". She laughed a little and added happily: "Oh, James is really clever! Can't you see how he has arranged this business, in a way nobody ever tried before? I know that he's eager to see us arrive and he doesn't know how our hearts are warm with happiness".

By that time "Kaukuuo" had passed two bus stops without stopping. The girls had already forgotten about Ndatheru and started lauging a lot remembering how they had been able to cheat the conductor telling him that they were going to meet a woman at Gatithi, when, actually, it was a young man.

When the bus reached Gatithi, it stopped and the conductor opened the door and Gathoni got off. Then he prevented other people from getting on the bus, he explained that it was full and there was only one seat for a woman, whose fare had been paid from Karaatina. Then he turned to Nyarwimbo and asked her: "Where's that woman you said we were going to meet here?" Before Nyarwimbo could answer, a young man, who was wearing a very expensive

black suit with a radio in his hand(7), stepped up to the door of the bus, looking very happy. He greeted Gathoni and she explained him that his seat to Nairobi had been paid by his girlfriend Nyarwimbo. Then the young man, James, tried to board the bus, but the conductor pushed him back violently. He looked at Nyarwimbo again and said: "I want to see that woman whose fare has been paid for her because her ticket is here".

James told him: "It's me who's going to Nairobi with that girl. And this girl who has just got off was keeping my seat".

The conductor told him: "Stop cheating, my friend. How can you turn into a woman?"

Gathoni laughed and told the conductor: "This is our woman we told you about. You won't find any other".

From inside the bus the voice of Nyarwimbo was heard saying through shameless laughter: "That's it, conductor, let the young man board, maybe something has prevented the woman from coming".

The conductor frowned with anger at being tricked that way and, looking bitterly at Nyarwimbo, asked her: "So that was your secret plan and you tricked me, heh? Is this young man going to give you your money back(8)?"

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(7) The "expensive black suit" immediately denotes James as a high-rank clerk and the "radio in his hand" as a well-off man.

(8) Gakaara individualizes his characters with a few trats. He wants to stress that the conductor is very concerned about money, something that will influence the development of the plot.

Nyarwimbo answered with a smile: "You just let him board, the money is ours".

Their Capture

The people who were in the bus were very surprised by that event and some of them laughed when they saw James board the bus quickly, go straight to where Nyarwimbo was and exchange greetings with her in great happiness.

James sat down between me and Nyarwimbo, and they each put an arm around the other's shoulder, showing great love on their faces. They went on talking in a low voice and they seemed to share a great happiness.

From there on, our bus went on with no further stops and some people began to doze. When we got past Maragua(9), a lot of passengers were asleep and the others had stopped talking, except for James and Nyarwimbo, who were heard whispering and their laughter was soft and quiet.

When we were about to reach the town of Thika, a small Saab car blew its horn behind us, wanting to pass. When it was given room, it overtook our bus at high speed, then, when it was a little ahead, it stopped and immediately two young men got out and started waving to stop the bus we were in. From their gestures it looked as if the bus had done something bad or dangerous.

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(9) Maragua is a village, about forty miles north of Thika town.

The driver stepped on the brakes and, before the bus had come to a full stop, Nyarwimbo glanced at those people who had stopped the bus and immediately stood up in alarm and said: "Oh, we're caught! There is no doubt that's my brother Waigwa".

James also stood up immediately in astonishment and said: "Ahi, ahi, and his driver is Itunda, a fellow with no sympathy in him!(10)".

At that point our bus had come to a full stop behind their car and immediately our driver and the conductor got off quickly and asked those young men why they had stopped the bus in such a bad place. Waigwa answered them at once: "We want some people you're carrying on that bus. We've come all the way from Karatina just for them".

"Who are they?" asked our driver, and they all went up to the rear door of the bus. Waigwa answered: "They are my sister and another girl from our village. I think that my sister wants to elope with a certain young man, but now she won't do anything of the sort. I must take her back home".

The conductor told Waigwa: "Get in and look for her quickly because this is no place for a bus to stop. You know that if the traffic police find us here, there is no doubt that we'll be taken to court".

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(10) Kamwana karia gatari tha: literally "that youth who has no sympathy". Here the expression " youth " referred to an adult (Itunda is driving the car) is probably used in a derogative sense, meaning "that one who behaves like a small child".

"That's true", the driver agreed with the conductor, glancing at Itunda who was a driver like him, "and I'm showing you great respect by agreeing to stop here".

Inside the bus, as soon as Nyarwimbo and James saw Waigwa, they quickly consulted each other to decide what to say. James told Nyarwimbo: "You, don't deny that we're together because it would be no use with Waigwa. but don't agree to leave this vehicle, even if there's a fight".

And Nyarwimbo answered firmly: "I won't get off, even if they use force, we must confront them. But I know that Waigwa wouldn't hit me, unless I abused or did something worse(11)".

Waigwa had followed his sister, after being told the news in a straightforward way by Ndatheru at Karatina market. Ndatheru had told him that he had seen Nyarwimbo and Gathoni on the "Kaukuuo" bus going to Nairobi that day.

When Waigwa heard that, he suddenly remembered that about two days previously he had heard his mother tell off Nyarwimbo because she had not slept at home for two nights. Waigwa knew that at that time James had come home on a short leave of one week and he had often seen him with his sister.

He also remembered that at the beginning of the dispute, Nyarwimbo had been suspected by her mother of

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(11) Tiga hihi ndikimurumite kana ngamwika undu munene muno: literally "unless I abused him or did something very big to him", meaning "unless I abused or cursed him". In Gikuyu traditional society to curse was the "biggest thing" people could do to other people.

being pregnant and, when she was asked, she had admitted she was, but said she would only tell the name of the young man responsible after a little while.

Moreover, Waigwa remembered that about one day earlier he had met James in Karatina and he had told him that he had just arrived from Nairobi, but he was not going to stay at home long. For this reason, when he heard that Nyarwimbo was going to Nairobi, he had immediately understood that it was a business which had been arranged by her and her boyfriend James. But, he asked himself: "What's the point in hiding? Moreover, how is it possible Nyarwimbo has been convinced to marry before her pregnancy has been paid for?" He shook his head, looking down and said: "Nyarwimbo must come home first!"

She's Not Going Any Further

Then he had immediately asked for Itunda's small car for hire, and followed his sister along the road to Nairobi(12).

He did not know that Nyarwimbo was with James in the "Kaukuuo" bus. When Waigwa got on the bus, he saw his sister sitting next to James, looking at him straight in the eyes. He turned to the conductor and told him: "Very well, I see them". Then he went to where they were sitting

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(12) Gicuka: "Nairobi". This word originated from the name of the Cuka people who lived on the south east of Mount Kenya, whereas the word Nairobi comes from the name of the valley in the Maasai language, ewaso nairobi, "stream of cold water".

and said to Nyarwimbo: "Sister, I've been following you: WHere are you going?"

Nyarwimbo looked up at him and told him: "Hey, why don't you greet people first? And why are you angry?"

But before Waigwua could answer, James stood up and addressed some words of peace to him. He greeted him first, in the way people do when they know each other, showing happiness in his face, then he said to him: "I'm with your sister and we've no bad intentions".

Waigwa returned James' greetings, but said nothing about their intentions. James went on to say: "Nyarwimbo is going to Nairobi to settle a matter with concerns the two of us, but she'll be going back home the day after tomorrow".

At that point Waigwa shook his head and answered, with a defiant smile: "I see, but unfortunately Nyarwimbo isn't going any further. You did something very bad because you cheated our parents and I know there's no such matter as that you say you're going to settle. You, James, you are my friend and yet you elope with my sister without letting me know first. Now at home there's nobody who knows about this, and therefore Nyarwimbo must get off this vehicle so that I can take her back to our parents. If you love her, you can come in a proper way".

When Nyarwimbo heard that, her whole body shook with anger, so that even the seat where we were sitting, shook. She said to her brother: "Listen, Waigwa, it's true you're my brother, but you can't meddle with things that have nothing to do with you as long as father is still around. I, myself, have told mother about this journey and

probably, by now, she has told father. So, I can't see any reason for you to come and disturb me. I'm not running away and I've never thought of such a thing. I'll be coming back home just as James has told you. So, I'm not going to leave this vehicle and I'm going to go to Nairobi with James".

Waigwa looked very angry and said firmly: "I say you're getting off!" But Nyarwimbo answered him just as firmly: "If you want to kill me, do it, but I won't leave this vehicle. So, if you want everything to end well, go home and wait for me there, I'll be back the day after tomorrow at two o'clock".

Waigwa got so angry that he made a step forward and went for Nyarwimbo, trying to grab her and pull her outside. James quickly ran like an arrow and stood between them to keep Waigwa from fighting with his sister in front of people.

At that point the people in the "Kaukuuo" bus started getting annoyed for the delay. Some said that that vehicle had bad luck(13) because of this fight between a person and his sister(14). By then the conductor had become

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(13) Angi makoiga ati ngari iyo ina nyoni njuru: literally "some said that that vehicle had a bird of ill-omen". It is a Gikuyu belief that, on setting out in the morning, people can encounter something or somebody who bring good or bad luck and they call them birds of good or ill-omen. To the Gikuyu some birds foreshadow calamity. The cry of the owl, for instance, forebodes mishap. If someone about to make a journey, hears the cry of any bird of ill-omen, he must not start on any account. In Gikuyu folktales birds have the function of messengers of good or bad news.

(14) A similar statement is made by the passengers in the bus in If You'll Become a Christian... We'll Get Married, Appendix 2.3.

angriest of all. He went to Waigwa and said: "You, young man, we're not going to let you involve the people we're carrying in our vehicle in a fight. We've waited for you to talk to your sister and if you can't reach an agreement that's your business. We must finish our job and we can't annoy the other passengers because of you and your sister. If this young man is with your sister and he doesn't deny it, what are you asking the girl? Take the young man to court and ask for bridewealth!"

Waigwa turned to the conductor, with his eyes bulging, and said: "This girl's getting off for sure!"

The conductor answered him: "What we can't allow on this bus is a fight".

All this time our driver had been outside, listening to what people were saying in the bus. But when he heard Waigwa's words, he got angry. He immediately got on the bus, fired the engine and, turning to the people who were quarrelling, said: "I can't wait here for the traffic police to fine me just because of some fight. Conductor, you'd better tell that young man to get off: we've nothing to do with this marriage(15) of theirs which hasn't been previously arranged".

On hearing that, Waigwa caught fire too(16) and said to the driver: "Oooh! So you are the ones who help other

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(15) Uthoni: "process of making marriage payments". On this word, see also I Want You to Kill Me, Appendix 2.1.

(16) Nake akigwata mwaki: "he too caught fire". It is a pun referring to the foregoing paragraph. The driver "fired the engine" and Waigwa, like the engine, "caught fire" on hearing the driver's words.

people's girls to run away so that they can go where they want!

I've already said that I wasn't leaving this vehicle until my sister left. So, for the sake of peace, give her back the rest of her fare because she's getting off right now".

When the conductor heard about giving the money back, he sprang up like a lion when its den is invaded(17), and asked Waigwa: "Hey! I thought you were an adult worthy of respect, and now aren't you the one who's showing you're worthless? Now I'm telling you in a loud voice to get off this vehicle! Forget about that money: you're wasting your energies talking aboutit. You're not going to be given a single cent!"

People had been getting angrier and angrier and had been complaining loudly about being delayed. They made a big commotion asking the driver to go. The driver decided he had to go, without having any more sympathy for Waigwa.

The Arrival of the Traffic Police

Misfortune is said to be worse than the devil(18) and at that very moment, when the driver was putting the bus

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(17) Waigwa's aggressive attitude and talk do not help the situation. He said the most unsuitable and aggravating thing he could have said to the conductor who is strongly attached to money (cf. note 8 and also his advice to Waigwa).

(18) Mutino wiragwo ni muhiu kwi ngoma: literally "misfortune is hotter than the devil". Although there are several traditional Gikuyu proverbs on misfortune (e.g.

.../

in gear to leave, he saw a traffic police car stopping in front of his door.

"What are you doing here, driver?" the traffic policeman asked him as he got out of the car, holding his notebook for writing fines.

At that point everybody, even people who had been arguing, fell completely silent and just watched and listened. The driver got off the bus in utter exasperation and answered him, pointing out somebody: "Well, there was a young man who arrived in that small car and stopped us, as if we were in great danger. When we stopped, he told us that his sister was running away and she was in this vehicle of ours. Now, when you arrived, we were just setting off, because that person had made us very angry by delaying the vehicle and the passengers. Come and see him".

"I've nothing to do with your quarrel", the policeman answered the driver, "I only want to know why you stopped in a place where it isn't allowed by the traffic code. Now I have to fine you for that".

The driver answered him: "I know you can fine me, but I want you to see that young man so that you understand that it wasn't my intention to do something wrong".

At that point the policeman and the driver went up to the rear door. The policeman got on and asked in a loud voice: "Who's the one who's causing trouble here?"

.../

mutino uthatagia ndereri, "misfortune spoils one's plans", or mutino nduri njamba, "misfortune has no hero"), we were not able to find out whether the above is a traditional proverb or a recently-introduced one.

The conductor answered at once: "This is the person who's spoiling our job because we're carrying his sister".

Then Waigwa said to justify himself: "There's no trouble here, policeman, but I want this girl (he pointed to her), my sister, to get off this vehicle so that I can take her home because she left secretely with the intention of running away".

The policeman looked at Nyarwimbo, then again at Waigwa and asked him: "Why is it she wants to run away?"

"She wants to elope with that young man next to her who is called James. They arranged their plan secretely, as nobody at home knows about it".

The policeman asked him: "How did you find out?"

"I was told the news in Karatina by a young man from our village called Ndatheru".

The policeman laughed jokingly and asked Waigwa: "Really? What's the big sin? Indeed, I think that the young man wants to marry your sister to make here his, what else would he be trying to do?(19)"

Waigwa answered: "Even if he wants to do that, isn't he supposed to pay bridewealth for her, according to the custom? Now he's stealing her without any agreement(20) and without paying anything at all".

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(19) Each character in the story gives his own opinion about the argument and now it is the turn of the policeman. If, on the one hand, Waigwa exaggerates the situation, the policeman oversimplifies it.

(20) Kirikaniro: "strong agreement", "covenant" (cf. 16 Kinds of Love, Appendix 2.4).

When the discussion reached that point, James, trying to justify himself, said to the policeman: "It isn't like that, policeman, it's not as though I were stealing this girl, no. And Waigwa himself can tell you that his sister has been my sweetheart for a long time. Waigwa is a friend of mine and, moreover, his parents and mine know each other very well.

I agreed with the girl to marry soon, although we didn't tell people the day. Nobody thinks we could marry without paying the bridewealth to her father, which is what I'm going to do soon. What surprised us here was to see this young man, whom I'm supposed to call brother, shame us in front of these people, and I've told him that I and his sister are going to mar...".

Before he could finish the sentence, the policeman interrupted him and said: "Listen, young man, I didn't come here to hear your case, and I don't need to know your reasons or your testimony in this matter. Both of you know very well where a case like this should be taken, and it's up to you to do so, if you wish(21). What I don't want, is to have this bus stopped here because of you". In conclusion he asked James: "Where do you work?"

"I work as a clerk at M.O.W. in Nairobi".

The policeman asked Waigwa: "So, don't you know James well and, moreover, didn't I also hear that his parents and yours know each other?"

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(21) Just like the conductor before him, the policeman cannot solve the case and thus advises the two parties to appeal to a court of law.

"Yes, that's true", answered Waigwa, while people were dissenting in low voices and were laughing a bit. Then he said: "But, even if it's true, James hasn't treated us with much respect, because there's another little matter, that I don't want to mention here, but he knows what it is and that's why he wants to cover it up so that it won't be known. For this reason, even if he's going to pay the bridewealth, he must do it while my sister is at home, so that the other little matter can also be solved in the way it should".

When the discussion reached there, people realized that the case had reached a turn point and started whispering to each other looking at Nyarwimbo. At this point Nyarwimbo's face could be seen changing and the policeman asked her: "You girl, do you have anything to say about what has been said so far? Why don't you go back home so that this matter can be settled?"(22)

The Case is Settled by an Elder

Nyarwimbo did not say anything and looked down as she knew that Waigwa was about to talk about her pregnancy. When James saw his beloved looking down, he realized that if he was not firm, Waigwa would succeed in taking her home. Pushing aside his shyness, he said to Waigwa: "You, Waigwa, it's true your sister told everything to your mother before she left, but I haven't seen any council of

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(22) Niguo ihuha riri rikiambe rihihwo: literally "so that this boil can be squeezed".

elders(23) sent to our home by your father. Moreover, as far as that little matter is concerned, I haven't denied anything and I can't see anything wrong if Nyarwimbo comes with me and then comes back home as we arranged. Now, you're a witness that I'm with her".

At this point an elder, whose hair was almost grey, sitting on the back seat, cleared his throat, as if he was about to cough, looked at the policeman and said in a loud voice: "You, policeman, you can see the kind of man I am. I worked as a tribal policeman(24) for ten years, then I was appointed an elder of the council(25) for six years and I've judged many cases like this and some of them were much more more difficult to settle".

Everybody turned their face to the elder to listen to what he had to say. And the policeman, very pleased, said to the elder: "It's a very good thing you're here, old man(26). Now we appoint you the judge in this case.

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(23) Those men who had had their first-born circumcised, were called athuri, "elders". In special circumstances they could hear minor cases which did not involve a serious offence. Serious offences were judged by the council of senior elders, known by a variety of names, such as kiama kia mburi igiri, "the council of two goats", kiama kiria kinene, "the big council", kiama gia athamaki, "the council of leaders", or simply kiama, "the council". It used to be the highest authority in the land, vested with legislative, executive and judicial functions (cf. G. Muriuki, op. cit., 1974, pp. 126-8.

(24) Thigari-kanga: or muthigari wa makanga, "tribal policeman", literally "policeman with a kanga". The word kanga means "large printed square cloth". The tribal policemen used to dress in a large blue or red cloth with a red or blue border.

(25) Cf. preceding note.

(26) Muthee: "elderly and respected man", "elder", like mzee in Kiswahili.

Whatever you decide, is the way it will be, without any question or reply".

Everybody in the "Kaukuuo" bus was very pleased at the policeman's words and loudly said to the elder: "Stand up and judge the case, elder! Judge it quickly so we can go".

The elder got up, shrugged his shoulders and, feeling completely confident, said in a voice that showed great authority: "Listen, this is a case which has judged itself. This is a minor case which doesn't need much thought. If this young brother here had been seeking compensation for his sister, this case would have been settled long ago. But I hear that the core of this case is inside that little matter which hasn't been mentioned and which is the main point of concern(27) in this dispute. Therefore, had not it been for that little matter the case of the girl's running off woudn't have been difficult because of the friendship between the girl and her sweetheart is known by their families and, if the girl had got lost, she could have been found at her boyfriend's place.

From the words of the suitor I understand that what he expects is the council of elders sent by the girl's

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(27) Na kau gakuite mburi taatha: literally "and there is what contains the undigested stomach content of the goat", meaning "and there is the subject of concern in the dispute". Taatha are the undigested stomach contents of grass-eating animals, widely used by the Gikuyu for ceremonial purposes, especially for purification (see e.g. Middleton, John; Kershaw, Greet, The Central Tribes of the North-Eastern Bantu, London, International African Institute 1965, p. 66).

father. According to my knowledge of Gikuyu customs, when there is such a council about a girl, this is a complaint about a goat with a broken leg(28). There is no problem here because the suitor doesn't deny it. That is to say, this young man who wants to marry her is himself responsible for her pregnancy.

If this case involved my daughter, it wouldn't go to court. If the young man responsible for the pregnancy is himself willing to marry this girl here, there's no point in punishing him. Let him pay bridewealth little by little.

What can't be overlooked is that the girl was made pregnant while she was living at home(29). A ram should have to be given to the elders of the clan to eat and beer to wash it down. In that I'm following the words of the elders of old, who used to say "waiting is no burden"(30). But even so, the elders also said "even a baboon, if

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(28) "A goat with a broken leg" is a euphemism for "pregnancy". The Gikuyu commonly use this expression when they do not want to tell the name of the woman who is pregnant, e.g. mburi ya Kamau iyunitwo kuguru, "one of Kamau's goats has a broken leg", meaning "one of Kamau's daughters is pregnant". It can also be said in a direct way: muiritu uria munitwo kuguru, "that girl has a broken leg", i.e. "that girl is pregnant".

(29) According to Gikuyu custom, if a girl was made pregnant when she was living at her father's home, her child belonged to her father.

(30) Gweterera ti murigo: "waiting is no burden" is a Gikuyu proverb. There are several other proverbs which stress the importance of waiting, e.g. gieterero ti kiinaino, "to wait is not to tremble", or muetereri areaga ya mugwato, "the one who waits gets the best food".

robbed of its child, is given something to eat"(31). This means that, even if this young man is going to pay compensation for the pregnancy, or bridewealth, he must do something to show that he's going to do so. Concerning the case of this young man called James, what he'll be asked to do or may be asked to do first, is to offer 'dew beer'(32) to the council, because that's the evidence that he admits the pregnancy is his. For this reasonm if James pays 'dew beer' to Waigwa to take to his father, that's enough council(33) and Waigwa can't find any other reason to prevent James from going to Nairobi with the girl, if there is a written testimony". The elder concluded his speech and sat down.

The policeman looked at Waigwa and James and said: "That's it, my friends, you've heard the verdict

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(31) Ona nugu igitunywo mwana ni iikagirio muungu: "Even a baboon, if it is robbed of its child must have a gourd thrown to it". Muungu is an unripe gourd (Lagenaria) still on the plant. When the gourd-plant is unripe, it is edible and monkeys love them. Therefore, if one wants to rob a monkey of its child, one can throw an unribe gourd to it, so that it leaves the child alone to go and eat the gourd. The elder uses this proverb to explain that, although "waiting is no burden" and Nyarwimbo's father can wait and get the bridewealth in instalments, something must be given to him at once, as he has been "robbed" of his daughter.

(32) Njohi wa ime: "beer of the dew". When the elders of the council were called to judge a case, they were given beer to "wash" the dew from their feet, as they usually came in the early morning. The "dew beer" is a kind of payment for the inconvenience given to the elders, when asking for their intervention to settle a case.

(33) Kiu ni kiama kiiganu: literally "so the council is enough", meaning that, as the case has been settled, there will be no other council on that matter.

concerning you. Do what you're told, don't delay the vehicle any longer".

Then James took his wallet out of his coat and said: "I accept the verdict". He gave Waigwa fifty shillings and said: "Take this, it is the 'dew beer'. Take it to your father, and tell him that I'm with his daughter, and I'm ready to pay the bridewealth soon. And, as far as the compensation for the pregnancy is concerned, that will be arranged by my father when I tell him".

The policeman took two sheets of paper and the two young men wrote down a record of the payment and the policeman and the conductor put down their signatures as witnesses. Everybody was so happy that they spontaneously clapped their hands. After that the policeman said: "That's it, the case regarding the marriage payment on the bus called "Kaukuuo" bus is closed. Driver, start the ignition. You're very lucky I'm not fining you. And you, elder, we're grateful to you, we need elders like you in this country of ours".

As the vehicle started off, Nyarwimbo looked at James, shook her head laughing and said: "God is good

because this case ended well(34)".

"A STRONG ARGUMENT BREAKS A SET BOW"(35)

THE END

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(34) A similar statement is made by Kiwai wa-Nduuta at the end of Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute, Appendix 2.6.

(35) Kihooto kiunaga utamugeete: is a Gikuyu proverb meaning "a strong argument breaks a seat bow", or "revenge is appeased by reasonableness". Other versions of the same proverb are: kihooto gituaga ruga rutungi, "a strong argument breaks the strained cord of the bow", kihooto kigituraga ta mugeete, "a strong argument relaxes the bent bow". The Gikuyu have many proverbs stressing the importance of kihooto, "an unanswerable argument", "a powerful plea", which is also a key word in all Gakaara's writings.

2.3 If You Become a Christian... We'll Get Married
(Ungihonoka... no Tuhikanie)
February 1967

Ole Mulai Falls in Love with Wambui

Wambui was a pure(1) girl. She was a Christian and was respected by everybody for her nice way of talking. Ole Mulai was an uneducated Maasai moran(2) and he did not know English, not even a little.

The time Wambui first met the young Maasai man who fell in love with her, she had gone with her mother and her young brothers to visit her father. They had come from Ruiru village in Gikuyuland, in Kiambu District, where they lived. Wambui's father was working as a messenger in the office of the District Commissioner of Mau Narok town, in Maasailand, about 160 miles from Nairobi. All the members of the elder's family relied on God in all their matters and they were much loved by the people of their village.

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(1) Gathirange: literally "a virgin", but also, more generally, "pure".

(2) Moran: from the Maasai ol murrani, "warrior" and, more generally, "young man".

Ole Mulai was from Mau Narok area; his home, where his family had built their manyattas(3) for cattle herding, was about 6 miles from Mau Narok town Until then Ole Mulai had never seen a woman stand up in front of people and preach the work of God and that astonished him greatly because it was not a custom of his people for a woman to stand up in front of men(4).

Ole Mulai did not understand the Gikuyu language, he only understood a bit of Kiswahili of which he could speak very few words. That day he and a young man friend of his had gone to Mau Narok to take a bus for Nairobi because they wanted to see Kenyatta, whose fame had reached them.

Ole Mulai wore a cloth which reached his knees and was so smeared with ochre, that it was as red as the mugaka belt(5); and he had wrapt another cloth around his groin. He wore his long plaited hair in a pigtail(6) smeared with ochre and a lot of oil and he had a thin leather band around his neck. In his hands he carried a club and a long staff, as recently people have been forbidden to carry spears. On his feet he wore leather

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(3) Manyatta: (Maasai) traditional Maasai group of round huts with enclosure for cattle.

(4) It was not a custom of the Gikuyu either. She is allowed to do so simply because she is a Christian.

(5) Mugaka: red belt worn by warriors for dancing.

(6) Mwindiga: warrior's back pigtail.

sandals(7). He was tall and looked well-built and his face was light-skinned and shone with good health(8) and oil. He had a small moustache and a big gap in his teeth(9).

Ole Mulai's friend wore a coat filthy with ochre and he also wore his hair in a pigtail, wore leather sandals and carried a club and a staff. He could speak Gikuyu because he had lived with Gikuyu people for a long time when he was working in the Western part of Gikuyuland(10).

That very day Wambui with her mother and brothers were going back to Gikuyuland. Her father had accompanied them to see them off on the bus for Nairobi. They had to wait at the bus stop for about half an hour, so, while they were waiting for the bus, Wambui preached in Gikuyu because she did not know Kiswahili well; and it was then that Ole Mulai felt attracted by her and fell in love with her.

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(7) Nyamuga: from the Maasai enamuke, traditional Maasai sandals.

(8) Tondu wa kunora wega: literally "because he was well-fed", or "because he was properly fat".

(9) The Maasai traditionally remove the two lower central incisors.

(10) Kiambu District in Gikuyuland confines on the west with Maasailand. Wambui's family comes from that district.

She is Beautiful for Marriage

Wambui wore a dress with all the colours of the rainbow on it, which made her very beautiful, and she had a white scarf tied around her head. She wore red shoes and carried a small decorated handbag in which she kept her books for preaching. She was neither thin nor fat. She was tidy(11) and really beautiful.

When Ole Mulai saw Wambui addressing people in a loud voice, he asked his friend to tell him what that girl was saying.

His friend answered him: "She is preaching people about Jesus, who is the son of God. He was the one who was sacrificed by God and died so that all the people of the earth would be saved by his blood and forgiven their sins".

Ole Mulai laughed and said: "Isn't it men who are usually seen telling things like that to the crowd? This girl is beautiful and good for marriage, but, now, isn't she spoiling her goodness by being so cheeky standing up in front of men? Oh, this is really very sad!"

His friend told him: "No, it isn't as you think. I've seen many Gikuyu girls, and from other tribes as well,

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(11) Mutheru: "neat", "clean" and also "pure". Wambui is "neat" in contrast with Ole Mulai whose clothes are "filthy with ochre".

preaching and this isn't considered taboo by them. Even those who are married can stand in front of men and sing with their mouth wide open the word of Jesus-Jesus(12). What they can't accept is to get married to a person who doesn't belong to their group".

Just then Wambui looked in the direction of the two morans and said: "Jesus doesn't care whether you are dirty or clean and He doesn't want you to give Him money or cows. What Jesus needs is only your heart".

Ole Mulai's friend laughed and said: "So that's what she's telling us...". He translated what Wambui had said in Maasai. And when Ole Mulai heard that, he laughed and and said: "This is like saying that we're dirty, isn't it? But how can this Gikuyu girl know that we have a lot of cows?"

His friend answered him: "I think that all those things she 's saying are in that book she's reading from. Let's listen to some more". They went closer.

Wambui went on: "After accepting Jesus as your Saviour, your heart will become pure and you'll hate all evil things, you'll say the truth and live in happiness all your life. Jesus is the Son of God and anything you ask in God's name, truly, He'll give you and bless you. For this reason, I'm asking you with a lot of compassion,

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(12) This statement shows a certain contempt on the young man's part.

you brothers and sisters, to open your hearts to Jesus. Let Jesus enter your hearts just now".

All the words Wambui was saying were translated by his friend, and, when she stopped for a while, Ole Mulai said: "In spite of what we were saying, this girl is talking well". He stood on one leg, supporting himself with his staff(13) and, looking at Wambui, said: "And she's beautiful... and her tongue is as sweet as the thrush's(14). If she were a Maasai, I would go after her until I made her mine".

The part Ole Mulai enjoyed most was when Wambui led the singing of the hymn "Gutenderetha"(15). He liked the way all the people who were listening to Wambui's message joined in in singing back the refrain with great warmth, clapping their hands and tapping their heels hard and happily on the ground.

Ole Mulai went closer and closer to where Wambui was standing because he was attracted by her tongue. He was shaking his head without being aware of it, following the movements with which Wambui accompanied the song. And when they were jumping about with joy and giving praise, the

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(13) Typical Maasai posture.

(14) Nyamindigi: (Cossypha or Cape Robin) the red-breasted bush or Elgon thrush has a beautiful voice.

(15) Gutenderetha: Gikuyu rendering of Tukutendereza ("Let's Praize the Lord") a Ugandan Christian hymn which became very popular in Kenya in the sixties.

bus for Nairobi arrrived. The song ended and people waved each other goodbye very happily.

How Ole Mulai Spoke with Wambui

Until then Ole Mulai did not know that Wambui would take the same bus and, when he saw that she was boarding the bus, he decided in his heart that he had to tell her that he loved her, whether she accepted it or not.

When they sat down, Ole Mulai told his friend what he had in mind. He answered him: "Nobody can blame you for thinking this, but it is unlikely that such a religious Gikuyu girl will accept you just like that. Remember that we are on a journey. I don't know what made you feel attracted to that girl in such a strong way".

Ole Mulai answered his friend: "Why shouldn't I think about talking to her? Don't we say that a woman is a woman, no matter which tribe she belongs to? Go to her and tell her to come here because I want to talk to her and, if she refuses, come and tell me so that I can decide what to do with her".

His friend told him: "I don't want us to argue during our journey because it would bring bad luck(16). I'll tell

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(16) We find a similar statement made by Gikuyu people on a similar occasion in Me and Nyarwimbo (see Appendix 2.2).

her that you want her to come to preach to you, because this is the way to catch her".

When the bus set off, Ole Mulai's friend went up to where Wambui was sitting next to her mother and said in broken Gikuyu: "Ale you vell, dis gil?"(17)

At first Wambui laughed a bit with her young brothers, who were sitting in the seats behind her, then she answered in a respectful way: "I'm fine, thank you".

The Maasai told her: "Vile you vele speaking apout Jesus dat Maasai molan vas vely intelested. Now he vants to heal mole apout dat. Vill you come to talk to him little, little in the cal?"(18)

Since he was speaking in a way that was barely understandable, Wambui could not quite understand what he was saying, but after he had repeated it a few times, both she and her mother finally understood what he wanted.

Wambui was very pleased when she heard that she was requested to preach the Word of Jesus and she praised the

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(17) Ore mwega mueretu oyo?: for uri mwega muiritu? The young Maasai man does not distinguish between the half-close i [with tilde], u [with tilde] and half-open e and o in Gikuyu. Moreover, he makes some grammar mistakes.

(18) Hengo erea okwaragia oholo wa Jesu, molani uria wa Maasai niakwindete kumenya mono. Reu noakenda koigua oholo ocio rengi. Ne oguka ukamwiraga hanini hanini motoka-eni?: for Hingo iria ukaragia uhoro wa Jesu, morani uria wa Maasai niakiendete kumenya muno, riu ni akenda kuigua uhoro ucio ringi. Ni uguka ukimwiraga. It is interesting to notice that the Maasai often pronounces l for r, as the Gikuyu do.

Lord for that. While the bus travelled on, Wambui went to where Ole Mulai was sitting and the three of them sat down together. Wambui greeted Ole Mulai by shaking hands with him and asked him in Gikuyu: "How are you?"

Ole Mulai happily answered in Kiswahili: "I vely fine, put I can't speak Kukuyu"(19).

Wambui smiled and said: "Now, what am I going to thay becauthe I don't know proper Kithwaili either?"(20)

Their friend said: "Ve can mix up all togeder: Kukuyu-Kiswaeli-Kimasai and also English, if somepody knows it. All ve need is just to know the vold of Jesus"(21).

Wambui was happy at the idea, but said in Gikuyu that, before talking about the word of Jesus, people always close their eyes and pray to God. When Ole Mulai was told that he was the first to close the eyes. He covered his eyes very tightly with both hands.

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(19) Ejambo sana, langini mimi afamna nachuana Kukuyu: (Kiswahili) for Sijambo sana, lakini mimi sijui Kikuyu.

(20) Thasa tathema nini na ata mimi abana gujua Githairi thawathawa?: (Kiswahili) for Sasa tutasema ninihata mimi siji Kiswahili sawa sawa. Also the way Wambui speaks Kiswahili in the "Gikuyu way" is funny. She pronounces th for s, as the consonant s does not exist in gikuyu.

(21) Tachakanya-cha-kanya ote famocha: Kukuyu-Kiswaeli-Kimasai na ata Kisungu kama mtu nachua. Maana hacha yetu ni kuchua maneno ya Jesu tu: (Kiswahili) for Tutachanganya chote pamoja: Kikuyu-Kiswahili-Kimasai na hata Kizungu kama mtuanajua. Maana haja yetu ni kujua maneno ya Yesu tu.

Some of the passengers on the bus who despised the word of Jesus, started laughing and making fun of those things, but Wambui went on doing her work without paying any attention to them, until they stopped.

When the prayers finished, Wambui asked Ole Mulai's friend to translate her Gikuyu for her, so that her message could be understood. Wambui said her name to Ole Mulai and Ole Mulai told her his and, after they had introduced themselves, Ole Mulai told Wambui how he had been happy listening to the message she was preaching to the people and how he had been even happier when he saw Wambui boarding that bus and how he had decided he would speak to her.

Then he told her in a straightforward way: "Because of your speech, even though the Maasai don't like women to stand up in front of men, I liked you. Even though you're religious and you're a Gikuyu, you do intend to marry, don't you? I was also touched by your words when you said that Jesus doesn't care whether people are dirty like me or clean. Isn't it the same for you?"(22)

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(22) The Maasai is no longer speaking in broken Kiswahili and his speech appears in correct Gikuyu.

Wambui Thought It Was a Joke

At first Wambui did not take his words issue seriously because she did not think that Maasai moran could have fallen in love with her. But, as they talked, she understood Ole Mulai's intentions.

She looked at Ole Mulai and, as she thouroughly inspected his heart, she became moved by his telling her that he loved her. Wambui tried very hard to be strong in front of those young Maasai men and prayed God in her heart to show her what to answer to Ole Mulai because she saw that He had brought this test to her.

She took out her Bible, showed it to him, and then told him: "We Christians are guided by this Book and since I'm a woman, I believe that I would marry any man God had chosen for me to live with, but first I'm going to read to you Second Corinthians, Chapter 6, verses 14 and 15. It says this:

> Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do the righteous and the wicked have in common?... And how can a person who believes and one who does not receive their inheritance together?

"This is why", Wambui said to Ole Mulai, "though I don't know whether you're joking, it's good for you to know that it isn't a question to be taken so lightly. Before we decide to marry, the two of us must become one in the name of the Lord. That is to say that you must be

saved by Jesus as I have been. I can't see any objection to becoming yours, but the decision concerning these things isn't for me to be taken, it is God the One who has given us life and He is the One who looks after us, and, even now, at this very moment as we're talking, he sees in your heart and mine, whether we must live together".

As she spoke, Ole Mulai's heart was beating fast because he had been very impressed by her words and by then they had reached the town of Nakuru, where the passengers could get out for 10 minutes to have tea.

Wambui, Ole Mulai and their friend went to a nearby "hoteli"(23), sat at the same table and ordered tea. Wambui showed Ole Mulai how to say grace over tea and, while they were drinking and chatting jokingly, He could see that she liked him. As they talked, Ole Mulai's friend said: "Even though Jesus doesn't care about dirtiness or cleanliness, shouldn't Ole Mulai shave this hair of his, wash himself and wear modern clothes?(24) I've never seen a religious person smeared with ochre!"

Wambui took his words seriously because she opened the Bible and said: "Once again I tell you that I'm guided

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(23) Hoteli: from the English "hotel", small establishments serving soft drinks, beer, food and, at times, accomodation.

(24) Nguo cia matonyo: "European clothes" or "modern clothes"; literally "clothes to put on" as opposed to traditional clothes which were wrapped around the body.

by the words which are in this book. Concerning the matter of cleanliness, let's see Exodus, Chapter 19, verses 10 and 11. It says this:

> And Jehovah said to Moses: "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow. Make them wash their clothes, for Jehovah will come down in the sight of all the people".

"This shows us that Jehovah is clean and, since we belong to Him, we must be like him and go clean into HIs House. Therefore, it's up to Ole Mulai to decide for himself whether he's going to shave his pigtail, wash himself and wear clean clothes".

The Bus Accident

Ole Mulai did not say whether he would shave his hair or not. He liked his hair very much because, when he was herding he would tidy it up all the time(25); so he said that he would think about it. He also asked Wambui with much love to tell him where he could learn the Word of Jesus until he could understand Him fully and also how he could meet Wambui frequently.

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(25) Traditionally, Maasai morans wear long hair, whereas women shave their hair and polish their head brightly with fat or butter. It is quite common for the young Maasai men to spend part of the day grooming their long strands of hair, while watching their cattle.

Wambui explained to him that it was easy to accept Jesus. It was not taught like mathematics or writing, it only happened when a person, after listening to His Word, made a sudden decision that he or she had accepted Him and therefore he or she renounced all those things which did not comply with His wishes and followed Him(26).

After finishing their tea, they got back on the bus and Ole Mulai was feeling very happy because he had learnt about Jesus. While walking, Wambui had taught him how to sing short hymns in Kiswahili, like the one which says "The Blood of Jesus Cleanses Completely"(27).

She also explained to Ole Mulai that just knowing about Jesus and singing were not enough and that people should accept Him into his or their heart, be born again and wash themselves in His blood in order to become totally His.

When Wambui's mother and brothers and others on the bus found out that that Maasai moran had become a disciple of Jesus, they were all very happy and sang, jumping about with great joy. Wambui was no longer aware of Ole Mulai's dirty clothes, to the extent that her own clothes got smeared with a lot of ochre.

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(26) This is an anticipation of what will happen later to Ole Mulai.

(27) Damu ya Yesu husafisha kabisa: (Kiswahili) "The Blood of Jesus Cleanses Completely" is a very popular Protestant hymn.

It was about five o'clock and the bus had just passed Limuru town when something which cannot be described(28) happened: because the front wheel of the bus came off while it was going very fast, it went off the road, fell into the ditch, overturned and curled up.

Wambui's mother, three other passengers and the driver were killed on the spot. One of Wambui's brothers, Ole Mulai's friend and others suffered minor wounds in various parts of the body, which would heal quickly. Therefore only a few of them spent the night in the hospital, whereas the others, after having their wounds bandaged and treated, went home.

He Was Spared in Order to Be Saved

Ole Mulai's friend went back home to Mau Narok and told the news of the accident and also how, before it happened, Ole Mulai had fallen in love with a Gikuyu girl to the point that she had converted his heart and he had become a Christian. That was very astonishing news and could not be believed.

That night Ole Mulai did not come to at all. At about one o'clock the next day, he became conscious of where he was. When he came to, he woke up and in his delirium, he

(28) In the sense "something amazing", "something undescribable and unbilivable".

began calling the name of Jesus and repeating the words of the song that Wambui had taught him saying: "The blo-o-d of Je-e-sus, Je-e-sus, the blo-o-d of Jesus, Jesus, Jesus!"

It happened when Wambui had come to visit him for the fourth time that day. When Ole Mulai began calling the name of Jesus deliriously, Wambui was seized by the Holy Spirit and shouted like a madwoman: "Lord! Lord, receive him!" When, crying tears of joy, she wanted to embrace Ole Mulai, the doctor stopped her.

By then Ole Mulai's hair had been shaved off, his head had been wrapped in a white bandage to cover his wounds. His whole body had been washed and he was so clean that nobody would have recognized him.

Wambui's father and Ole Mulai's father came from Mau Narok because of the accident. The body of Wambui's mother was taken to Gikuyuland and buried with great honour in the Christian way.

While Ole Mulai stayed there in the hospital, Wambui came to visit him and she was able to help him to change his heart. Ole Mulai saw in his heart that God had spared him from the bus accident so that he would not die in sin and for this reason he thanked God, repented his sins and received Jesus. Wambui brought the leaders of her church to the hospital and they prayed for Ole Mulai and thanked the Lord for his salvation.

The young man stayed in the hospital for six months. When he left, he wore clean clothes and went back home to Maasailand, where he joined the local Christian church. He started to learn catechism(29) and also going to adult literacy classes and learnt how to read and write(30).

Meanwhile, his parents and Wambui's father arranged about the payment of the bridewealth and the two married in a holy marriage. Wambui's father bought a very large section of uncultivated land from Ole Mulai's father, and now all of them live there in Maasailand in great happiness.

THE END

BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL FOR THEY WILL BE SHOWN MERCY(31)

[All the names mentioned in this story do not belong to real people, but are fictitious]

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(29) Irathi cia U-Ngai: "Protestant catechism".

(30) Local churches often offer literacy classes for adults. It is not clear in what language Ole Mulai learnt to read and write.

(31) Matthew 5:7 (from The Beautitudes).

2.4 16 Kinds of Love
(Mawendo Mithemba 16)
June 1968(1)

1. LISTEN, I ADVISE YOU

Here is a woman who, seeing that her daughter has reached the age to be loved by young men, wants to advise her so that she may know how to behave.

My daugher, sit down, and listen to my advice,
I want to help you in your days of love,
The eyes of young men are looking at you,
My girl, listen, I advise you.

I have been a young woman too, the cunning of young men I know,
Their goodness or badness, everything I know,
Nobody wants to appear poor,
all of them know how to seem better than they really are,
My girl, listen, I advise you.

As they never end learning new tricks,
their eyes are likely to overcome you,
So you ought to learn some little lies to defend yourself from them,
My girl, listen, I advise you.

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(1) A shorter version of this booklet, entitled Marebeta Ikumi ma Wendo (Ten Love Songs/Poems), was published in 1952.

Don't be proud in front of young men, but please them with your liveliness,
Because, if you behave freely with them,
They will talk ill of you.

The one that God chose for you, you will know from his talk and his respect for you,
My girl, listen, I advise you.

Once you know him, and you have confidence in him,
You will show him your love and he will show his love to you,
A good marriage brings respect and good reputation to a good woman,
My girl, listen, I advise you.

2. I SEE YOU IN MY DREAMS

Because she thinks so much of her lover, she dreams of him. Let us see what she dreams:

So, you want to touch me with your golden hands?
Ah, do you want to kill my heart completely by
embracing me like this?
Listen, how my love is beating in my breast!
It's you, there is no doubt, I can see you are my
lover,
Oh, how wonderful you are my lover!
I'm ure that there is no other man but you!

I see your eyes shining and I feel like dying,
Now I really feel that you have killed me,
Your lips are like honey, always so sweet,
I beseech you not to finish all my strength,
Oh, how sweet you are my lover!
I'm sure there is no other man but you!

Really do you want to go, my lover, and leave me like this?

Now that the feeling of my love for you is about to overflow(2)?

All the parts of your body, they are all tender,

I cannot leave you until you embrace and kiss me,

I'm finished, I'm fainting, I'm finished completely,

I 'm sure there is no other man but you!

(2) O riria rurarako rwa wendo ruirurite mwiri wothe: literally "now that the feeling of love has filled my body completely". It has a sexual connotation.

3. GET MARRIED, MY SON

An elder, seeing that his son has reached the age of marriage, advises him:

My son, people who are united are never defeated(3),
For how long do you want to go around in this world alone?
A man without a wife cannot have a good reputation,
My son, get married, bring us back home(4).

My son, look back, the years have passed,
Look at your age group, all your age-mates have married,
Wake up, look for the daughter of somebody and she will become your queen(5).
Yes, you already have a home where your age-mates will come to visit you,
My son, get married, bring us home.

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(3) Andu mari ndundu matiuraga: "who are united are not defeated" refers to a well-known Gikuyu proverb, andu matari ndundu mahuragwo na njuguma imwi, "people who are not united are conquered with one club". The same concept is expressed in several other proverbs, e.g. kamuingi koyaga ndiri, "a small group of people lift the heavy mortar", or kaara kamwe gatiuragaga ndaa, "one finger cannot kill a louse".

(4) "Us" refers to the elder and his wife. When they die their grandchildren, will continue their lineage and they will be able, through them, "to go back home".

(5) Ngatha: traditionally the word meant "favourite wife", but, after christianization, it acquired the new meaning of "queen" and was applied to the mother of Jesus and to the Queen of England.

Pray God to give you offspring, so that you will call
your children "father" and "mother"(6),
Who does not like little ones playing at home?
In this way a home comes to be known in the land.
Old age makes no noise when it approaches(7)
My son, get married, bring us back home.

Yes, may joy fill you, God is the giver,
May He bless you with a hard-working wife, but you,
Do not become lazy,
If you become a peaceful and wise husband, your home
will be prosperous and respected,
You know very well that the goodness of this world
has no end,
And that sweetness eats up itself(8),
My son, get married, bring us back home.

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(6) According to Gikuyu customs, the first-born son is named after his paaternal grandfather and the first-born daughter after her paternal grandmother. Thus, the young man will call his son and daughter "father" and "mother" because they are named after them.

(7) Ukuru ndugaga mbu ugiuka: Gikuyu proverb literally meaning "old age does not howl when approaching" or "old age comes stealing on".

(8) Muri ni wiriagira: "Sweetness eats for itself" is a Gikuyu proverb used as strong advice not to follow certain things only because they are sweet. The same concept is expressed by other proverbs e.g. murio ugiraga kieha, "sweetness brings sorrow", murio uminaga magego, "what is sweet spoils teeth", or murio urutaga hungu muti iguru, "sweetness makes the hawk descend from the tree".

4. A GOOD GIRL FOR MARRIAGE

Now it is time for the young man to look for a girl to marry. it is time for him to think what kind of girl he would like to marry. What kind of girl would he like to marry?

Tell me who is a good girl and old enough to marry,
and I shall marry her.
Yes, the one who is not like millet by the side of
the road(9) is the one I want,
I want the one who is said not to be learned(10).
Find one for me, look for a good girl I can marry.

Where is a girl who is valued for her peaceful
nature?
Yes, the one who is mature and generous,
I want the one who is said not to be
knowledgeable(11),

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(9) People who walk on the path, tread on the millet which grows beside it. Travellers have also the habit of breaking off the ear of the millet, which grows by the side of the path, and chewing it while walking. Also the farmer, when he wants to test the ripeness of the crop, chews the ear of the millet near the footpath. The Gikuyu have also a proverb which expresses the same concept: kiere kia njira-ini gitigwatagwo ni muura, "the millet by the footpath never pollinates", or "the one who is repeatedly abused loses his or her value". The road gives also the idea of street-walkers. The young man is looking for an "unspoilt" girl, that is to say a virgin, to marry. All the expressions in this section have got a double meaning and refer to sex.

(10) Meaning "who does not know anything about sex".

(11) Cf. note 9.

I shall let her know,

Find one for me, look for a good girl I can marry.

Where is a lively girl who is hospitable(12)?

Yes, the one who is educated and good-mannered(13)

I want the one who is said to be untaught(14),

I shall teach her,

Find one for me, look for a good girl I can marry.

Where can I find a girl who is respected and who has got a good reputation?

Yes, the one who is valued by people,

I want the one who is said not to be grown(15),

I shall make her grow up,

Find one for me, look for a good girl I can marry.

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(12) Koima-andu: literally "one renowned for hospitality and kindness". The Gikuyu value those wives who became attached to their husbands' family.

(13) Kena ugi wa githomo ona wa muciarire: literally "who has the wisdom of education and also that of upbringing".

(14) Cf. notes 9 and 10.

(15) Again in the sense of "a virgin".

May somebody tell me where there is a girl looking for a home?

Yes, the one who is loved for her nice talk and for her work,

I want the one whom God has blessed for me and my parents,

Can somebody tell me where she is?

Find one for me, look for a good girl I can marry.

5. A GIRL LOOKS FOR A LOVER

This girl shows that she has chosen herself a young man as her true lover. Let us see her reasons for loving him:

Who, who will tell him that I love him with all my heart?
I have chosen him among his age-mates,
I chose the one who is not self-centred, so that we may live together,
Let him know, let him know that he is the one
I chose.

Who, who will tell him that I have got him in my heart?
He sets my heart on fire all the time,
I chose the one who is not a boaster, so that I may take care of him,
Let him know, let him know that he is the one
I chose.

Who, who will tell him that I respect him with all my heart?
Because of him I am envied by the girls of my age-group,
I chose the one who is not extravagant, so that we may prosper together,
Let him know, let him know that he is the one
I chose.

Who, who will tell him that I have found a place for
him in my heart?
Although there are traps set in my way(16),
I chose the one who is not after the happiness
of the body alone,
Let him know, let him know that he is the one
I chose.

Who, who will tell him that I have found a place for
him in my heart?
I have given myself completely to him,
I chose the one who is generous and will care for me
until I die.
Let him know, let him know that he is the one
I chose.

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(16) In the sense "I know I may lose his favour because there are traps set in my way".

6. OH, WHAT DID YOU GIVE ME, DARLING?

This lover shows that her love is beyond measure. Let us listen to her reasons.

Darling, what did you give me, that I am getting
to be more and more foolish?
Did you drink a love-potion(17) for me, or was I
bewitched(18)?
Whenever we are together we decide to leave each
other and go different ways,
But after a while I start looking blindly for you,
Oh, what did you give me darling, what did you give
me?

Darling, what did you give me that I caught this
illness of loving you?
Even when you make fun of me(19),
I cannot leave you,
Why have you absorbed all my thoughts(20)?

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(17) Ngunga: traditional love-potion.

(18) The lover who is speaking in this section distinguishes between the drinking of the love potion, which is not considered witchcraft, and bewitching. Witchcraft can only be practised by witchdoctors and is highly feared by the Gikuyu.

(19) The verb used here, guthirekia, "deride", "provoke", implies that the action is done in front of other people and jokingly, but with the precise intention of seriously hurting a person.

(20) Ukihunjite ota miruki meciria-ini makwa: literally "you have spread like air inside my mind", meaning "you

.../

Your words kill me when I am still alive,
Oh, what did you give me, darling, what did you give me?

Darling, what did you give me, that I behave like a madwoman?
I go like a demented creataure because I am thinking of you.
You fill my whole heart so that I cannot breathe(21),
Why do I feel no joy when we are not together?
Oh, what did you give me, darling, what did you give me?

Darling, what did you give me, that I have become blind because of loving you?
That even if you are rude to me(22), I feel you are only joking?
You have exhausted me in all ways, how could I leave you?

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filled my mind completely, so that I cannot think of anything or anybody else".

(21) Ugakiiyura ngoro yakwa yothe igakiaga uhuhirio: literally "you fill my whole heart so that there is no space left for me to breath". This image is connected with that in the foregoing stanza (see note 19).

(22) The verb used here, gucinura, "be rude to", also implies that the action is done in front of other people (see also note 18).

Now I have got this bug from you and you know the reason,

Oh, what did you give me, darling, what did you give me?

7. THE FINAL DECISION

This young man and this girl have been in love with each other and now he wants to marry her. What does she say?

Young Man:

Darling, it is time we got married,
Yes, so that we may live together and you become mine,
Your love has covered me like cloth on my body,
Give me your heart now, say yes, darling.

Young Woman:

Darling, I have no doubts that you really love me,
And you have seen that I love you completely,
But I feel the strength to tell you that I am not ready,
Please, give me time to decide whether to say yes or no.

Young Man:

Darling, wipe the word "no" from your mind,
Because I have been waiting for you with all my heart,
Do not belittle yourself by taking time,
Give me your heart now, say yes, darling.

Young Woman:

Darling, there will never be another man as long as
you are alive,
I have respected you from the time we met,
Do not doubt of me even if I do not answer you now,
Please, give me time to decide. Will I say yes or no?

Young Man:

Darling, the time of anxieties is over(23),
The time of tormenting our hearts,
Let it finish now,
It is said: "first is first, but to stay behind is to
find oneself in a crowd"(24),
Give me your heart now, say yes, darling.

Young Woman:

Darling, it is not hard for my lips to say "yes",
And I do not want to disturb your heart, darling,
Let my mind concentrate on my feelings peacefully,
Please, give me time to decide. Will I say yes or no?

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(23) Hingo ya kuhiahia wa wendo: literally "the time of burning for love". The verb kuhiahia, "to become anxious", "to become impatient", comes from the verb kuhia, which means "to be on fire".

(24) Mbere no mbere, thutha ni mugiyano: "First is first, but to stay behind is to be in a crowd", Gikuyu proverb meaning "it is better to take the risk of being first than to wait and perhaps miss what one was waiting for because later on other people may want the same thing".

Young Man:

Darling, may the force of love make you strong,
Why do you feel shy to say "yes"?
My ring as a covenant(25) is waiting for you,
Give me your heart now, say yes darling.

Young Woman:

Darling, your words have consumed all my strength,
Because of your love I cannot go against your actions and words,
Now, what is left? I am the slave of your love,
Take me, I say yes, I am yours forever.

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(25) Kirikaniro: "covenant", the word indicated a traditional coventant and then, after christianization, it came to signify "Christian covenant". The Old Testament and the New Testament are called in Gikuyu Kirikaniro Gikuru, "Old Covenant", and Kirikaniro Kieru, "New Covenant".

9. COME QUICKLY, DARLING

Here the two lovers have been far from each other for a long time and now one of them is writing a letter expressing his wish to be together again. It reads:

Darling, please come quickly, come quickly,
Because I always pray that my eyes will see you again,
Do not forget your beloved,
Be quick, come hastily, be quick, darling.

Darling, come to end the anguish of my heart(26),
Because I want to see and touch you,
It is only you, darling, who is my strength and sweetness,
Be quick, come hastily, be quick, darling.

Darling, even my heart has faltered(27)
because you are far away,
Let me see your face because I dream of you,
Yes, come and appease the turmoil of love in my heart,
Be quick, come hastily, be quick, darling.

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(26) uka unine ninoga ya ngoro yakwa: literally "come and end the tiredness of my heart (because of waiting for you)".

(27) Ona ngoro yanahinja ni kundaihiriria muno: literally "even my heart has slimmed because you are very far". The verb kuhinja means "to get thin", "to lose weight", "to be emaciated".

Darling, if I could only hear your beautiful voice!
Come, I feel weak(28) because I cannot stop thinking about you,
Come to end my sufferings(29) with your lips covered with honey,
Be quick, come hastily, be quick, darling.

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(28) In the sense "the fact that you are always in my mind weakens my body (because of my sexual desire)".

(29) Uka unyanange na miromo iyo yaku ina uki: literally "come to finish my strength with your lips covered with honey", in the sense "come and put an end to my sexual desire". In Gikuyu hinya wa mundu, "the strenght of man" means also "semen" and, in this context, miromo, "the lips", but also "doorway", entrance", may mean "vagina".

10. THE PRISON OF LOVE

This person is completely in love, he/she is like a prisoner of his/her lover. Listen to what one lover is saying to the other.

Oh, how is it possible I cannot get you out of my mind?
I am your slave day and night,
When I remember your kisses, I become like a small child(30)
Help me now, set me free, release me, darling.

Why, if I play(31) with somebody else, can I get no satisfaction?
My limbs tell him/her immediately that I am not pleased with him/her,
Why am I not able to love him/her?
Help me now, set me free, release me, darling.

Tell me, how is it possible I love you so much?
When I listen to you, I sigh,
I dream of you caressing me with your soft hands,
Help me now, set me free, release me, darling.

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(30) In the sense "I became dependent like a small child".

(31) In this context the verb guthaka, "to play", has got a sexual connotation.

How is it possible that the moment I try to forget
you,
Is the moment my heart loves you more?
I become like a born fool(32), I go to pieces,
Come now, break these chains you tied me with,
Advise me now, set me free, release me, darling.

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(32) Kirimu kia muciarire: literally "a person mentally retarded from birth".

11. LOVE FOR THE HAPPINESS OF THE BODY

After being in love with the young man, the girl finds out that he does not to get married. What does he want?

Darling, I know what kind of person you are,
I have seen that for you love is in the happiness of the body,
You deceive me with your lips, but your heart is not there(33),
Do you think I am so foolish to let you get your satisfaction for nothing(34)?
Hey! No, this kind of love must end!

Darling, you are not a fool, I know very well,
You are cunning at avoiding promises for the future,
Because for you what matters is only to sleep with me,
Isn't it? You see that I am in trouble(35), but you gad about in the country,
Hey! No, this kind of love must end!

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(33) In the sense: "your lips say things you do not believe in".

(34) In the sense: "to have sex with you if you do not marry me".

(35) The girl is probably pregnant.

Darling, you know how to tease me and almost defeat me,
When you embrace me and kiss me passionately,
But my heart has been weighing you on a scale,
Yes, I shall ruin your plans with mine,
Hey! No, this kind of love must end!

Darling, the peak of happiness is marriage,
Go away and out of my mind,
Oh, how could you put me in danger(36), without caring?
Hey! No, this kind of love must end!

(36) Cf. note 34.

12. HE WHO DOES NOT LISTEN TO ADVICE ENDS UP IN TROUBLE(37)

This shows how a person who has been blinded by love and does not listen to advice later on comes to regret it.

Hadn't I told you to watch his behaviour?
Hadn't I told you that he only loves you with his lips?(38)
You thought I was a fool and did not understand that I have seen many things,
When I told you that you would come to regret it later,
Didn't you tell me I was bad?
He who does not listen to advice ends up in trouble.

I told you that you would be left bear under the sun(39),
I told you that what is found easily is easily lost(40),

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(37) Murega akiirwo ndareraga akihetwo: Gikuyu proverb literally meaning "the one who ignores advice does not resist when being prepared for burial", or "one may refuse to listen to advice, but later on comes to regret it".

(38) In the sense "he only say he loves you", "he pretends he loves you",

(39) Very common expression, meaning "be left in trouble", i.e. under the sun, with no shelter.

(40) Nyoneka narua-ri, youraga o narua: Gikuyu proverb literally meaning "what is found easily is easily lost", or "easy come, easy lost".

Did you think he loved you only because of his kisses?
You did not listen to my advice and said it was only meant to hurt you,
He who does not listen to advice ends up in trouble.

Hadn't I told you that you would not have been accompanied(41) properly afterwards?
Hadn't I told you that your goodness(42) was going to be spoilt for nothing?
You were easily cheated and your gave yourself completely to him,
You were happy because you believed his lies,
You thought of nobody else,
He who does not listen to advice ends up in trouble.

Didn't I tell you that you were not the only one he loved in that way?
I told you that love for the happiness of the body never lasts,
You said that you could not deny anything to him, otherwise he would have got annoyed,

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(41) The verb gutirithia refers to sick or aged people and means "to walk slowly, with difficulty", as when carrying a heavy load. By using this verb, the person who is speaking in this section, probably the mother of the girl, means that his daughter "would not be helped if sick, in old age or in difficulty".

(42) Wega waku: literally "your goodness". Wega is a very general word meaning "good", but when it refers to a girl, it means "virginity".

When I told you to write down an agreement with him, did you not treat me disrespectfully(43)?

He who does not listen to advice ends up in trouble.

(43) Gucinura: "be rude", "be cheeky" to somebody older or of higher status.

13. A WIFE QUARRELS WITH HER HUSBAND

The husband has become useless at home. He does not help his family. His wife is accusing him in private(44). What does she remind him of?

My husband, family affairs cannot be discussed in public(45),
Is not the happiness of the home brought about by the husband and his wife?
Didn't we know that we were going to have a home?
That you were going to help me?
If you leave me alone, how can I manage to play both my part and yours?
A home is not a home if a husband does not look after it(46).

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(44) The verb used here, gucirithia, "to bring a charge against", usually refers to public disputes settled by elders and it is apparently in contrast with the following expression gatundu-ini kao eri, literally "in a private discussion between the two of them". The first stanza explains that "home affairs cannot be discussed in public" and that is why the woman is accusing her husband in private (cf. note 43). By using the verb gucirithia, "to bring a charge against", the author wants to underline that, although the woman is blaming her husband in private, her accusations are extremely serious.

(45) Cia mucii ti como: Gikuyu proverb literally meaning "family affairs are not to be let out". This concept is underlined in numerous other proverbs, e.g. cia mucii itiumaga mbera, "family affairs must not go into the open", or cia mucii itiumagirio magiri-ini, "family affairs should not be escorted outside the homestead".

(46) The Gikuyu say muthuri ni gitugi kia mucii, "the husband is the pillar of the home", gitugi being the central pole of the traditional Gikuyu round hut. Without the main support a hut cannot be built, therefore a "home is not a home" if the husband is not there.

My husband, family affairs cannot be discussed in public,
Is not the happiness of the body brought about by the husband and his wife?
You leave early in the morning and come back when the birds are silent,
Oh, when you are late, don't I wait for you full of sorrow?
My husband, you go to sleep without caring about your children,
A home is not a home if a husband does not look after it.

My husband, family affairs cannot be discussed in public,
Aren't the children happy when they see their father?
Yes, when they see that you bring presents(47) home, they come to you,
They are happy to eat with their daddy before going out to milk the cattle(48)
A home is not a home if the husband does not look after it.

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(47) Managi: literally "precious, rare things". The word implies "things that are not to be found in Gikuyuland". Thus, the woman means that the children are happy when their father comes back home after a journey and brings them presents".

(48) The Gikuyu family in the countryside eat together in the evening, before the children go to milk the goats or the cows.

14. LET HER GO AND NEVER COME BACK!

This is what the husband says after his wife has abandoned his home. Now he is saying truthfully what he has been thinking of her:

What kind of wife is the one who has no ears for her husband?
She ran away from my home, and I did not say anything because I was too angry(49),
What is a woman for, if she is lazy?
She liked eating all day long, speaking empty phrases,
Let her go and never come back!

What kind of woman is the one who shames her husband?
When she had eaten, she sat all day long,
Was I supposed to work for her, as if she were my boss?
And she said she would go to any hill she could reach(50), what is that?
Let her go and never come back!

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(49) The verb used here is kung'athia, "to be angry", and also "to be surprised at something abnormal". The man was angry with his wife, but also shocked when she left him.

(50) O kirima ngagua: Gikuyu saying, literally meaning "to whatever hill", or "to any destination whatsoever". This is also the title of a booklet published by Gakaara in the early fifties (cf. bibliography of Gakaara's works).

What kind of woman is the one who likes boasting?
She thought herself clever because she cheated me in many ways,
She always found some reason to cling to, so that she could do what she liked,
Let her go and never come back!

What kind of woman is the one who does not bring a good reputation to her home?
My home was ashamed because of her,
Hey! The principle she based her happiness on was being cared for,
Let her go wherever she can fit in, the road is wide,
Let her go and never come back!

15. A GOOD REPUTATION BEGINS AT HOME(51)

After getting married, the husband and his wife are advised by their parents on how to run their new home. They are told:

Children, you always reap what you sow(52),
You man, love your wife in happiness and in sorrow(53),
Protect her and help her, make her always happy,
A good reputation begins at home, we bless you with our love(54).

Children, a child grows according to the way it is brought up(55),
You woman, respect your husband and happily obey him,
Yes, people with a good reputation are greeted in the

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(51) Ngumo yumaga na mucii: Gikuyu proverb literally meaning "a good reputation comes from home".

(52) Agethaga o kiria ahandite: "one reaps what one sow". It does not seem to be a traditional Gikuyu proverb, but the biblical "what you sow, you must mow".

(53) Although the parents are referring to the ideal Christian marriage, their advice also complies to the traditional idea of a good marriage. Thus, Christian and Gikuyu codes reinforce each other and co-exist in this section.

(54) Twamurongoreria wendani: "we bless you with our love for you" is a traditional blessing.

(55) Mwana areragwe-ri noguo akuraga: "a child grows according to the way it is brought up". We were not able to trace this proverb.

morning(56),
A good reputation begins at home, we bless you with our love.

Children, good things cannot be easily found(57),
Work hard together, may God bless you with offspring,
A home is a husband and his wife, childrens are beautiful gifts(58),
A good reputation begins at home, we bless you with our love.

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(56) Before going to work in the fields, neighbours greet each other.

(57) Gutiri kindu kiega kiumaga hega: Gikuyu proverb literally meaning "there is no good thing which can be easily found" (cf. note 39).

(58) Mathaka: "personal ornaments", "trinkets". Young men used to give mathaka as presents to their fiancées. Here the word may mean either "gifts" or "ornaments", or both.

16. LET US PART

After loving him/her for some time, one lover sees that he/she cannot accept the other's behaviour. Why?

Now I confess: do not disturb my mind any
longer,
I have come to know you from head to toe(59),
It is not you the one I loved, it is not you the one
my heart loved,
I have learnt to read you through and through.

I have seen that we see love differently,
Because you give your love to other friends when my
eyes are watching you,
I do not want to argue with you, go away,
I have learnt to read you through and through.

When I am in sorrow, when I belittle myself and when
I pity myself,
Is that the fime for you to find a way to hurt me
more?
Let us part in peace, go your own way,
I have learnt to read you through and through.

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(59) Kuma gitina kinya githetwa: literally "from the lower part to the top". Gitina is the lower part of a plant, whereas githetwa is the top section of the sugar-cane stem (near the leafy part). The edible sweet part of the sugar-cane is the lower part, whereas the top is bitter. Thus, the expression not only means "from head to foot" (or rather "from foot to head"), but also "both the good (sweet) and bad (bitter) part of you".

2.5 Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute
(Ndugeta Ungi Maraya)
Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No.1
August 1976(1)

2.5.1 Preface: The New Layout of "Gikuyu na Mumbi"

Since the magazine "Gikuyu na Mumbi" ceased publication we have been receiving a lot of letters from our readers asking to resume publication(2). This shows that people liked "Gikuyu na Mumbi" a lot.

Due to a general increase in the costs, paper has become particularly expensive and we can no longer sell the magazine at the old price. Since we stopped publication of "Gikuyu na Mumbi" we have been thinking of ways of reducing costs to be able to once more please our readers.

Now you can see the new layout of the monthly "Gikuyu na Mumbi". It will contain important stories on the ways of people and other things which will help our readers. This month we present a story which people liked a lot(3) about a young lady who was called a prostitute by a man drunk on beer.

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(1) A shorter version of this narrative had appeared in the Atiriri Series No. 2 in January 1967. An enlarged version has been published in November 1987 (cf. 11.1 and 11.2).

(2) In 1972 Gakaara had started a general monthly entitled Gikuyu na Mumbi (Gikuyu and Mumbi), but it did not sell well and after four years the publication was stopped (see 5.5).

(3) The story had been published in the Atiriri Series (see preceding note).

We have also left some space for whoever would like to advertise their business and we have reduced the advertising rates. We hope that our readers will continue reading "Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine" every month and we are ready to receive your views.

2.5.2 Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute

Why Do You Call Me a Prostitute?

When the woman from Nairobi named Jeneti was abused by a man, her angry tears ran like water. She angrily bit her little finger, wiped away her tears and, after a little while, she said, looking at the ground:

"Now, why didn't God make me a man, since merely because I'm a woman, I can be insulted as if I were the lowest of the low? Has he insulted me only because I'm not strong enough to fight him?"

She raised her head and looking at the man with angry eyes from a distance, she said in a low voice, which was heard by some people:

"You, you'll see: Never again will you call a woman you don't know well a prostitute!"

It is said that Jeneti had been married for three months and she looked like a really beautiful young lady. That day she was dressed in such a way that people were looking at her. She wore a tight dress(4) that fitted her

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(4) Nguo ya taiti: "tight dress"; taiti comes from the English "tight".

very well and a pair of shoes with high heels. Her hair had been straightened and she was carrying a leopard hand-bag on her shoulder. She had a basket full of vegetables, tomatoes and potatoes.

It was about half past one on a Saturday afternoon and she was about to board a "Kenya Bus" vehicle to go back to the village of Milimani(5), where she lived with her husband. Her husband was a very important man in the government, in the legal branch.

As usual on Saturdays, a lot of people buzzed with busy activity in Nairobi and, at that moment, the young lady was in hurry because she wanted to catch her bus. As there was a crowd of people, a man, who was coming in her direction, staggered into her as they were passing each other and, since he was drunk on beer(6), he shouted at Jeneti, saying: "Why don't you let me by, you prostitute?"

The young woman stopped immediately and asked him:

"Why do you call a person you don't know a prostitute?"

The man could not understand that Jeneti had a right to ask that and he answered defiantly:

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(5) Milimani: ("on the mountains" in Kiswahili) posh area in the outskirts of Nairobi, formerly inhabited by Europeans only.

(6) Tondu wa gacohi karia kaari mutwe: literally "because he had two horns on his head". The Gikuyu used to drink beer in traditional horns, thus the expression means that the man had drunk "two horns of beer", that is to say too much beer.

"What are you going to do to me for calling you a prostitute?" He went on his way and added boastfully: "I'm wa-Nduuta and I'm afraid of nothing!"

A small group of people had witnessed the happening, some drivers, sellers of tea, and women selling ripe bananas and oranges. Some drivers, who knew wa-Nduuta and knew how he could not help saying bad things when he had drunk beer, made him stop insulting the young lady. Wa-Nduuta was so drunk that he got on a vehicle and took a seat, without even realizing he had done something.

It was then that Jeneti decided to call the policemen so that they could defend her because that man had insulted her very badly.

Some of the women and drivers knew the integrity of that young lady and her husband and for that reason they were ashamed of what wa-Nduuta had told her in front of many people. Some tried to console Jeneti, telling her that the man completely lost control every time he drank beer, but Jeneti was not satisfied with their words. She went to a nearby coffee shop and dialled "999" for the police.

When the police heard that the young lady who was ringing was the wife of an important man in the government, an inspector and two constables went immediately there, where the argument had started. When the police car arrived, Jeneti went up to it.

Wa-Nduuta Brings a New Accusation

At that moment people realized it was the young lady who had called the police. Some friends of wa-Nduuta's tried to tell him secretely to get off the vehicle and run away, but before he could do that, the police arrived where he was and arrested him.

When the inspector asked wa-Nduuta why he had called Jeneti a prostitute, he denied it and invented a new story. He said that Jeneti had insulted him in English, calling him a "bathitad"(7). He said that, as she had insulted him first, he had understood that she was not a respectable young lady, and so he had insulted her back. He added that when they had bumped into each other, she should have said "thoree"(8) to him, like a civilized woman, but Jeneti had not.

On hearing that the inspector laughed a little and asked wa-Nduuta: "And you, did you say 'thoree' to her?"

Wa-Nduuta answered: "No, because when I was about to say 'thoree' she called me a 'bathitad'".

The inspector turned to Jeneti and asked her: "You, did you insult this man as he claims?"

Jeneti answered: "No, those are all lies. All these people were there and they can tell you whether they heard me insult him. What made me really angry was the answer he

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(7) Bathitad: distorted way in which the Gikuyu pronounce the English word "bastard".

(8) Thoree: distorted way in which the Gikuyu pronounce the English word "sorry".

gave me when I asked him why he had called me a prostitute without knowing me and it was then that he answered me in a loud voice that...".

The inspector did not let her finish her sentence and asked the people: "Is there anybody who heard this young lady tell those words to this man?"

Those people looked at each other silently and nobody answered. The inspector asked Jeneti: "Who are those people you said were there?"

Jeneti pointed at five people who were there and also indicated the person who had asked wa-Nduuta to stop insulting her. After asking those people whether they were there and they answered affirmatively, the inspector wrote down their names and then asked Jeneti and wa-Nduuta to get into his car so that they could go to the police station and write a statement.

When they left, people were left discussing the matter and concluded that wa-Nduuta was wrong and he had no reason to claim that he had been called a "bathitad".

At the police station Jeneti dictated her name and accusations and wa-Nduuta did the same. The inspector asked wa-Nduuta to pay bail of one hundred shillings so that he could be allowed to leave until the day of the trial. But wa-Nduuta did not have the money, so he had to stay in a small jail until the next Monday because that was the scheduled day for the trial.

Jeneti set off for her home. She felt a very heavy weight in her heart because it was the first time she had gone into a police station and more so because of the trial.

She asked herself: "What brought me such bad luck after marrying, since nobody had ever insulted me during my girlhood?"

Moreover, although wa-Nduuta had insulted her badly in front of people, she felt in her heart that some people had not approved of her calling the police. After thinking a lot she came to the conclusion that she had no choice, as she could not see how else she could have been defended from that man drunk on beer.

One thing that she doubted was whether those people, whose names had been written down as witnesses, would be on her side: they might be friends of wa-Nduuta. For this reason her mind was so troubled that she did not realize that she had reached home. She felt like someone in a dream when the bus stopped and the conductor told her that she had arrived at her stop.

Telling Her Husband

When she arrived home, she cooked with a troubled heart and around 7 p.m.her husband arrived home. While they were eating, she told him the news:

"Today, my husband, I've done something that I've never done on this earth".

Her husband looked at her and, as he saw her face change, he asked her: "Really? What did you?"

Jeneti answered: "I made a person be jailed at the police station for calling me a prostitute".

Her husband laughed in disbelief and asked her:

"A prostitute? What did you do to him?" Is it true the man is in jail at the police station now?"

The woman answered: "Why should I tell you a lie, my husband? Let me tell you the whole story from the beginning to the end, so you'll be satisfied".

Then Jeneti told her husband the whole story of how the quarrel with wa-Nduuta had started. Her husband listened attentively, nodding his head in agreement while eating his food. When Jeneti finished her story, her husband asked her: "Did the man give his name at the police station?"

The woman answered: "I heard him say his name was Kiwai wa-Nduuta and when the inspector asked for his father's name, he said he didn't know who his father was".

Jeneti's husband asked her: "Did he say where he came from?"

"He said that he had no home and that, before dying, his mother had told him that he was born on a farm of a European settler around Nanyuki town. When the State of Emergency was declared, wa-Nduuta was arrested and detained at Manyani [Detention Camp] and, while he was in detention, his mother died".

Jeneti's husband paused for a while and then said: "I think that's why the inspector refused to let him go before he paid his bail. Maybe he looked as if he was drunk on beer".

Her husband frowned, put his left hand on the table and kept silent for a long time thinking and, by that time, they had finished eating. Jeneti cleared the table and took away the dishes. When she came back, she was

surprised to see her husband still in the same position absorbed in his thoughts. She asked him:

"Do you think I did the wrong thing, my husband?"

The man answered calmly: "It's not a small matter on either side. I can see that the person did you a great wrong in calling you a prostitute, but I wonder whether he did it because he was drunk on beer, or whether he simply wanted to be rude. It's not likely for a person who has enough brain to go around abusing people he doesn't know, because he may get himself into big trouble.

I think some people get confused by the modern ways in the country, these days, especially because of the new fashions in women's dresses. Nowadays loose women dress themselves and adorn themselves like decent girls and women, so it has become very difficult to tell who is a prostitute and who is not a prostitute. But, even if it is so, the law doesn't allow anybody to call a woman a prostitute, unless he knows that that woman does those shameful things.

A Bad Reputation

The man went on and said to his wife: "I know that you were extremely hurt in your heart and, moreover, there were people there who knew you, but there's only one thing that makes me think a lot and that's the idea of a scandal. People who do things out of anger or hastily without thinking, later come to regret it. My wife, I want you to understand that the reputation of a good name in the country is a very important inheritance. Many people

lose many things(9) in order to protect their names from a bad reputation of any sort whasoever.

Therefore, in a lawsuit like this, we ought to think whether it may, even if you win, taint my name or yours because we may be talked about by people who may say: 'So and so's wife is bad, conceited or rude'.

This happens because even now some of our people haven't forgotten the olden ways which decided or dictated that a woman had no right to judge a man or make him go to jail, and that all quarrels and conflicts ought to be judged by men for men. Therefore if a woman didn't comply with this, they would treat her as an outcast of no value to the community and they would start spreading rumours that she was like this or that.

These people forget that such things are coming to an end. Nowadays men and women are equal in the eyes of the law and a man has no right to mistreat a woman only because she's a woman".

When the husband reached this point, he paused for a while. His words had struck the woman and since she did not know what she ought to do, she asked her husband:

"What do you want us to do, now? I see your words are true because even when the police came to arrest that man, I saw the accusing faces of some people, pointing at me and clicking their tongues. There's no doubt that those people are like the ones you said hadn't changed their

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(9) Probably in the sense "they spend a lot of money because they have to bribe in order to protect their name".

minds. That's why I can see that this matter is going to affect us as you say and you in particular, because your name is respected in the government".

The man answered Jeneti wisely and peacefully:

"I'm happy you understood my point so quickly. I expect that, unless that person is a born fool, then it's clear that the beer made him do that. So, before I take a decision, I must see him first and hear what he has to say, so I'll know what to say. For this reason, tomorrow, although it's Sunday, we'll go together where he's been jailed so that we can hear his view when he isn't drunk".

The Case at the Police Station(10)

The next morning Jeneti and her husband got into their car and, as usual, went to church to pray God and then they went to the police station. Kiwai wa-Nduuta was brought out of the small jail by the inspector and taken to the office where Jeneti and her husband were.

It was then that the husband asked Jeneti in front of the inspector:

"Is this the person who insulted you?" Jeneti answered: "Yes, that's him".

Before the man could speak again, the inspector said: "This person looks as if he's middle-aged but behaves like

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(10) In the first edition of the story, published in January 1967 in the Atiriri Series, the headline was different and read Gutiri Uheraga na Ihitia Riene; this is a very common Gikuyu saying which means "one only learns from his own mistakes" or "only when one makes a mistake and suffers from its consequences, one learns the lesson".

a child". He looked at wa-Nduuta with angry eyes and told him: "Or are you a Nairobi hooligan, you man?"

At that point wa-Nduuta could not look at anybody because he felt ashamed, especially because earlier he had happened to find out whose wife the woman he had insulted was and he realized he had made a big mistake. He answered the inspector: "No, I'm no hooligan, I'm a driver, but now I'm jobless".

Jeneti's husband asked him: "Now, since I see you are my same age, have you got a wife?" Wa-Nduuta answered: "I had a wife, but she ran away".

The man told him: "It doesn't matter whether she ran away, before she left you, would you have been pleased if you heard that somebody had called her a prostitute, especially in front of a lot of people?"

Before answering yes or no, he wanted to explain first how he had bumped into Jeneti, trying to defend himself. But when he was trying to do so, the inspector rebuked him sharply and told him aggressively:

"Stop telling your tall story. I myself checked your story, because after I had locked you up in jail yesterday, I went back to the place where you insulted this lady. Everybody I asked said that this lady hadn't abused you as you wanted other people to believe. Admit that it was the beer that ruled your mouth".

The inspector paused and Jeneti's husband asked wa-Nduuta again: "Would you have been pleased if somebody had called your wife a prostitute?"

Wa-Nduuta answered humbly: "No, I wouldn't have been pleased".

The man told him: "This woman is my wife and she's no prostitute. You did a great wrong to her and to me as well. I wasn't present when you insulted her, but I feel I must settle the case with you, keeping the lady out of it. Now, since you are a man(11) like me, how do you want us to decide this case? Do you want us to follow the government procedure, through my lawyer and yours, or do you want us to follow the Gikuyu way?"

Wa-Nduuta bowed his head, like somebody who was in grief.

The inspector told him scornfully: "Hey, stop it! When you insulted this lady, didn't you tell her that you were wa-Nduuta and were afraid of nothing?"

Wa-Nduuta said: "Sir, don't you know that nobody wants to be taken to court, unless obliged? Now, whether we follow the government procedure or the Gikuyu way, it makes no difference to me because I can't argue with you. And I must admit I've done you a great wrong.

If you ask me, I can only say that you should be my prosecutor and should also be my judge in this case, in the way you consider appropriate. Because the Gikuyu used to say: 'Nobody regrets another's wrongdoing(12)' and also 'Restlessness will finally come to a standstill(13)'".

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(11) Muthuri: "married man with children or of an age to have children", "elder", but also a respectful form of address, "sir".

(12) Cf. note 10.

(13) Murugarugo ugiraga mukindirio: (proverb) "Restlessness will finally come to a standstill".

Because of wa-Nduuta's humble words, Jeneti's husband did not ask him anything else. He kept silent for a while, looking mercifully at wa-Nduuta and then told the inspector and Jeneti that the three of them should consult in private. Wa-Nduuta was left there watched over by a policeman. When they were in private, the man told the inspector: "I've no ill feelings towards that person and I can see that, if I take him to court, there's no doubt that he'll be jailed because he has no money for a fine. Isn't it that he didn't have even the 100 shillings for bail? Now, as he himself has said, one only pays for one's own wrongdoing, and I can see that this person was drunk on beer and now he has repented completely. Let's his having spent the night here in prison be his punishment.

The man went on and said: "But there's one thing I want him to do before he goes, that is he must apologize to my wife in front of us. If he admits that he has done her wrong, my wife will tell him that she has forgiven him and there are no ill feelings any more in her heart, because, before this, they didn't even know each other".

The inspector thought a bit and then said: "If this is what you have decided, this is what we'll do, there's no need for further discussion. I'll remove the case from the court docket and say that there wasn't enough evidence for a case to be taken to court. But I'm going to warn him strongly that if he's caught again for a similar offence, I'll remember this case and he'll be given a severe punishment".

The Decision of the Group

When they went back to wa-Nduuta, Jeneti's husband told him: "You, man, the Gikuyu of old used to say that 'beer is not the devil(14)' and I believe they had examined carefully the matter for saying those words. I know that if you had drunk too much beer, you wouldn't have been able to walk. You knew what you were doing because what you said at the time is evidence enough.

Moreover, if a person, after drinking, is allowed to go around insulting people in this way, it means that beer doesn't make people happy in spite of the fact that a lot of people drink it for this reason and so it ought to become illegal.

You ought to change your habits and then you'll talk like a grown-up, according to your middle age. Now, even though you've asked me to prosecute and judge you myself, wasn't I told by the inspector that you didn't have a 100 shillings for bail? Taking all this on account, there's nothing I want from you, except that I want..."

Before he had finished, the inspector interrupted him and told him: "First, let me tell him something, honoured sir". The inspector looked at wa-Nduuta contemptuously and told him:

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(14) Njohi ti ngoma: (saying) "beer is not the devil". Kwina na ngoma, literally "to have a devil", means "to be mad" and the saying shows that "drunkness is not madness", in other words, if a person is drunk, he knows what he is doing, whereas a madman is not responsible for his actions.

"You, although you call yourself Kiwai, has there ever been a Gikuyu with such a name(15)? Isn't it a name for a hooligan? All the things you do, man, are written clearly on your face and I can see you aren't a peaceful person among the community.

If I had the chance to take the law on the palm of my hand right now, you wouldn't leave this place before being given thirty strokes, so that you'd feel pain in your body and heart. Nobody is as wicked and conceited as you are for calling this peace-loving and respectable lady a prostitute, a shameless name, in front of people; and when she spoke politely to you, you went on insulting her. Do you think that we were put here by the government to watch over trees? No, it's people like you.

You're very lucky that these people are religious and feel mercy for you. I've agreed to their request, but let me tell you this, Kiwai wa-Nduuta: if you're brought into this office again for drinking beer, you'll know that I'll remember to do what I said".

Then the inspector looked at Jeneti's husband as if to show that he had finished talking. Then the man told wa-Nduuta:

"It's the way you've been told by the inspector, I've seen that, even if you are jailed, I won't get any benefit whatsoever; and, moreover, I would be wasting your time, when you could try to change your ways for the future, as I asked you to earlier.

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(15) On the name Kiwai wa-Nduuta, see 10.17.

I've said you should be allowed to go just like that without being tried in court, but I want you to apologize to my wife because you insulted her".

When wa-Nduuta heard those words, he lifted up his hands saying: "Oh, God is really merciful because this is exactly what I've been praying for! I thank you with all my heart because of your verdict and I'll never forget this generosity you and your wife have shown me".

After that, he took a single step closer to Jeneti, bowed with both hands on his chest and said to her with great respect and very humbly: "I'm extremely sorry, generous lady. I beg you to forgive me because I did such a wrong to you".

Jeneti took his hand and, looking at him with compassion, she told him: "I forgive you because you've acknowledged your wrongdoing. I think that, along with thanking my husband, you ought to give many thanks to this inspector, since it's because of him that you're being allowed to leave here without being taken to court.

Besides, I ask you, if you can, to stop that habit of yours of drinking beer, because if this time you had been taken to court, you would have been jailed because of that. How can it be good, if when you drink it, it leads you into danger?

Go and remember those words you've been told by the inspector because, even if he shouted, you ought to take them as advice and take them very seriously".

Then Jeneti said: "I'm not angry any longer as I was because I believe that when you insulted me, you didn't

know me and I also didn't know you before. For this reason we have no grudge or other enmity".

At this point, wa-Nduuta feeling very ashamed, went to Jeneti's husband and shook his hand, then he shook the inspector's hand, saying:

"I thank you with all my heart. I don't know how I can make you all realize that your words, together with what you've done for me, have been a big lesson for me".

He looked happily at the inspector and told him: "I'll give up drinking beer, and I want you to enquire carefully from now on to see if you hear that I've been anywhere drinking beer".

The inspector laughed a bit and answered him: "I was told that by a lot of people, and after less than a week I saw them right back here. But, I'll keep your words in my heart, and if you do what you say, we'll all be happy for your change of heart".

Then the inspector asked Jeneti and her husband if there was anything else they wanted to tell wa-Nduuta, and when they said there wasn't, the inspector said to wa-Nduuta:

"You're free to go. Go and put on your shoes, go home in peace and never come back here again".

Wa-Nduuta Becomes Jeneti's Chauffeur

After that event, wa-Nduuta went on with his job of working for people as a chauffeur for short periods to get some money because he did not own a car.

One day, around ten o'clock at night, while wa-Nduuta was driving back after having taken some people to the village of Milimani, he saw a car standing by the side of the road among the trees. Suddenly he had a glimpse of two people running away from that car toward the trees.

Startled, wa-Nduuta slowed down and he could read the number plate of the car which was standing there. He thought that he had seen that plate before, but he could not remember immediately whose car it was. He drove slowly and when he approached the car, he saw a woman lying there on the ground. He immediately remembered that that car was the one he had seen with Jeneti's husband, and also saw that that woman lying there on the ground was Jeneti.

He stopped his car and rushed up to where Jeneti was in great fear, but his heart was determined to help the young lady who had forgiven him when he had insulted her. When he went near, he saw Jeneti with blood coming from her teeth and her eyes very swollen from being beaten.

He touched her chest and felt that her heart was beating and so he realized that she was not dead. He praised God and said: "Oh, what good luck she's alive!" He tried calling her name and shaking her a little, but Jeneti was completely unconscious.

Wa-Nduuta looked in Jeneti's car, but could not see anything of value. Before he decided what to do, he was hit on his back with a hard-thrown stone. Before he could think, he heard another stone hitting the car violently and immediately realized that it was the thugs who had run away who were throwing the stones.

Wa-Nduuta did not hesitate, picked up Jeneti in his arms and put her in his car, while stones were thrown at the car, without hitting their bodies.

Wa-Nduuta drove away at high speed and took Jeneti to Kenyatta Hospital in Nairobi. There he explained the whole story and, when Jeneti was examined, it was found that she had been hit in her rib near her heart, and that was what had knocked her unconscious. The doctor worked on her zealously until she came to.

When Jeneti came to, she said that the reason why she had stopped her car there was a fuel blockage. She was going back home from town, where she had been invited to a party to celebrate the birth of a friend's child. It was when she had gotten out of the car to fix it that two men came upon her and, without asking any questions, started beating her, covering her mouth so that she could not scream.

She said that she could not remember what had happened next because she fainted. When she was asked where her husband was, Jeneti said that he had gone on a short journey for two days in Europe(16). The police were phoned and fetched Jeneti's car and took the thugs' fingerprints off the car.

By that time wa-Nduuta had left the hospital, but he had written his name to indicate who had brought Jeneti to the hospital. When Jeneti was told that it had been a person called wa-Nduuta who had rescued her from the hands

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(16) Ruraya: literally "far away", means "Europe".

of the thugs, she could not remember when she had heard that name. But, after thinking for a while, she remembered him and told herself: "Yes, wa-Nduuta was the one who called me a prostitute".

To make sure, she asked the people who were treating her: "What did that man look like?". A young Sister described him to her accurately and told her that he was a driver of hired cars in Nairobi. Another man added: "That man said that he knew you and your husband very well and I heard him talk extremely well about him. He said that he'll come to visit you tomorrow morning".

On hearing that, Jeneti knew without any doubt that the wa-Nduuta who had abused her was the same man who had rescued her. She thanked God with all her heart and said: "It's really true that goodness is repaid with goodness!(17) If wa-Nduuta had been in jail because he had insulted me, I wouldn't have been here where I am now!"

When Jeneti's husband came back from his journey, he found Jeneti in the hospital and since she had almost recovered, she was allowed to go home and convalesce there.

Jeneti's husband was so happy that wa-Nduuta had rescued his wife from the hands of the thugs, that he and Jeneti thought of thanking him by giving him a gift he would remember for a long time. They decided that they

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(17) Wega urihagwo na ungi: (proverb) "Goodness is repaid with goodness". A similar proverb is Gwika wega kumaathaga ungi, "one good turn deserves another".

should invite him to their home to arrange the matter there.

Wa-Nduuta went there and told them:

To accept anything like a gift of thanks from you would be to show that I no longer remember the great kindness you did me when you forgave me the great mistake I had made, which would have made me to stay in prison until this very day. Therefore, I beg you to give up this idea. Let's just say that God has done His job. It's God who inspired you to forgive me, for if I had been in prison I couldn't have helped this lady".

After a little more discussion of the matter, it was decided that because wa-Nduuta did not have a steady job, they would employ him as Jeneti's chauffeur, to take her wherever Jeneti might want from then on.

Wa-Nduuta gave up hiring out in other people's cars and was given a good salary and a house to live in. He became a responsible person and changed his ways, having given up drinking beer, as he had vowed at the police station. He started becoming well-off and believing in himself.

Every Man Has His Share Put Aside for Him

THE END

2.5.3 What Will Help You?

After reading the story of Jeneti and wa-Nduuta you should have learned important things such as:

1. Beer makes people say or do things that can put them in danger. In fact, if wa-Nduuta had not been drunk, he would not have insulted a woman he did not know.

2. The police are there to assist people, strong or weak as they may be. In fact, Jeneti could not obtain satisfaction from Kiwai wa-Nduuta and so she called the police.

3. A good reputation is very important. In fact, Jeneti's husband had to sue wa-Nduuta in order to maintain his.

4. People who follow the teaching of the Church are peace-lovers. In fact, Jeneti and her husband had mercy on wa-Nduuta because they loved peace and feared God.

5. A person can repent after being talked to and without being punished physically or in any other way. In fact, Kiwai wa-Nduuta gave up drinking simply after being advised to do so.

6. Doing good deeds brings about tomorrow's luck. In fact, if wa-Nduuta had not been forgiven by Jeneti and her husband, he might have not been ready to sacrifice his life to rescue Jeneti.

7. Respect is more important than anything else, even wealth. In fact, wa-Nduuta refused any gift of thanks and later on he was given a job he could never have expected otherwise.

2.6 Wa-Nduuta Found a Job for a Girl
(Wa-Nduuta Akiandikithia Muiritu)

Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine No. 4
November 1976

Mwitumi Asks Jeneti for a Job

At around eight o'clock in the morning a girl called Mwitumi was standing outside a big block of offices in the town of Nairobi. Mwitumi intended to ask for a job as a typist at a Housing Development Company which was in that block.

Many workers were going into the building, but there was nobody that Mwitumi knew.

Jeneti arrived in her car, driven by her driver who was called Kiwai wa-Nduuta. She went into the building and the driver, after parking the car in its parking place, began to clean it with a piece of cloth.

Mwitumi went to Wa-Nduuta, greeted him and then asked him: "Would you please direct me to the offices of the housing company that are in this building?"

Wa-Nduuta asked her: "Do you want to see somebody or are you looking for a job?"

"I heard there is a vacancy for a typist, so I want to apply".

Wa-Nduuta asked her: "Are you really an expert typist?"

Mwitumi remained silent for a while, wondering why that driver was asking her those questions as if he was the employer, then she answered: "If you show me that office, I'll go and try my luck".

Wa-Nduuta laughed a bit and asked her: "Are you tired of my questions?"

"No, but I have a certificate that shows my qualifications for the job".

Wa-Nduuta told her: "That lady I've just driven here is the chief clerk to the boss and she is responsible for all things concerning the company. At present the boss is in America for a three month trip, so the lady is now the one who takes decisions in the office. I know that she is looking for a typist to help her with the work, but, as far as I know, she wants a well-qualified person who has at least three years' experience".

Although Mwitumi had passed her typing exams with very good marks, she had no previous experience. Thus, she was happy to know a little about the person from whom she was going to ask for work and what was expected of her.

Wa-Nduuta directed Mwitumi to Jeneti's office and told her: "Five people have already applied for the job, but go ahead if you want and try your luck".

Mwitumi was a young girl of sixteen. She was very light-skinned(1) and had big, shy eyes. She was wearing a short dress that fitted her well and she had pulled up her hair on top of her head.
She was plump and short and her red shoes looked somewhat old. She had a well-decorated small basket in which she carried her odds and ends.

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(1) A light-skinned woman is considered beautiful by the Gikuyu.

The Interview

In the office she gave her certificate to Jeneti who read it and told her: "I can see you did well, but, since there are many girls who want this job, I must interview you all. So, you can go home and wait for my letter which will call you to the interview".

When Mwitumi went out, wa-Nduuta asked her what had happened and she told him everything. Wa-Nduuta told her: "That is when they will ask you questions like the ones I asked you before".

Mwitumi asked him: "They will test our typing skills, won't they?"

"They will test your skills in dealing with all office matters, such as keeping office secrets, public relations, tideness of the office and many other things. Those who have already been interviewed were very much afraid of the lady's questions".

When that girl left, she went to Nairobi Municipal offices, where her mother worked as a cleaner. Mwitumi briefed her on all that she had been told by Jeneti and wa-Nduuta.

Mwitumi's mother was called Nyamigathi. She had no other children and no husband. She lived in the estate of Kawangware(2), about 6 miles from the city centre. She had sent her daughter to school in spite of great difficulties

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(2) Kawangware: housing estate in the outskirts of Nairobi quite notorious for thieves.

and the girl had reached form four. Then, because of lack of money, Nyamigathi had sent her on a typing course.

After completing the course, Mwitumi had looked for a job for about a year in Nairobi, but in vain. Her mother did not know what to do with her.

Nyamigathi looked younger than she was and it would have been very difficult to believe that Mwitumi was her daughter. Had she not worn her working clothes, she would have appeared prettier than her daughter. She was wearing earrings and, not being as fat as her daughter and being taller, she was quite becoming.

When Nyamigathi heard that an interview would determine whether Mwitumi would get the job or not, she thought a bit, leaning on the broom, then asked her daughter: "What do you think of that lady?"

"Hey! She looks at people from head to toe! But she does not speak with arrogance".

"Did she look older than me?"

"Oh, no. She is a young and beautiful young lady. But I think she has two or three children. When she was behind her desk she looked very respectable and she spoke in an official manner".

Nyamigathi kept silent for a while, then told her daughter: "We'll put all our efforts into getting you taken on by that woman. Isn't she a woman like me?"

On hearing her mother's words Mwitumi laughed and told her: "What can you give her, seeing you don't have anything which can please such an important lady?"

Nyamigathi replied to her daughter: "I don't have much, but I have something you don't know about. First of

all, I'd like to know where that lady lives and whether she has a husband. So, I want you to go back to that driver and ask him where I can meet him after work".

Mwitumi went to wa-Nduuta and passed on the message. He told her: "Go and tell your mother that I'll go to her work place at three. Wait for me at the gate, so that you can lead me to her".

Before the girl left, wa-Nduuta asked her where they lived. The girl told him they lived at Kawangware.

Kiwai asked her: "Is it your own house or is it rented?"

"We live in my uncle's house".

When Mwitumi's mother and Wa-Nduuta met, they could not talk much because it was during office hours. After introducing themselves, Nyamigathi asked wa-Nduuta to come to her place at Kawangware in the evening so that they could discuss the matter without any hurry. Wa-Nduuta agreed and Nyamigathi told him that she would wait for him at Kawangware bus stop at six o'clock.

At Kawangware

When wa-Nduuta went back to work and returned to his car, he began to think about that woman and her daughter. He knew that Nyamigathi wanted her daughter to get the job, but he wondered how he could help her.

Wa-Nduuta had been impressed by Nyamigathi's smooth talk and by her beauty, so he was ready to help her with her daughter as well as he could.

At Kawangware bus stop, at first wa-Nduuta could not recognize Nyamigathi because of the expensive dress she was wearing. He was looking out for her, when she went up to him and asked him: "Why do you look lost, man?"

Wa-Nduuta stared at her and laughed. Then he answered her: "Hey! I wouldn't have recognized you. You look so different".

Nyamigathi laughed too and told him: "It is because you saw me in my working overalls".

"Hey! You really look like a young girl!"

"Stop joking!" Nyamigathi told him, "Hey! You can see how my cheeks have sunk, and you still call me a young girl! Come, let's go home".

In the house belonging to Nyamigathi's brother there where many rooms which were rented by women(3). Nyamigathi lived in a room at the corner; it was much larger than the others. When they went in, Nyamigathi told wa-Nduuta: "This is where we live, in these mud houses".

Wa-Nduuta replied: "These are good houses. There are people who live in shanties and others who haven't got even a plot like this(4)".

As soon as they entered the house wa-Nduuta sat down and, almost immediately, Mwitumi came in carrying a basket full of beer which she handed to her mother. She greeted

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(3) Although the author does not state it openly, it is quite clear from the context that the man rents rooms to prostitutes.

(4) Probably in the sense "they haven't got even a plot where to build".

wa-Nduuta and then asked her mother: "Which chicken are we going to slaughter, mother?"

"Go and choose a rooster fat enough to satisfy this man's appetite".

Nyamigathi opened a bottle, poured the beer into a glass, put it on the table in front of wa-Nduuta and told him: "This is your beer(5), wa-Nduuta".

Then she opened another bottle and poured it out for herself. After taking a couple of sips, she noticed that wa-Nduuta was not drinking and asked him: "Hey, why are you refusing to drink my beer, man?"

Kiwai wa-Nduuta looked at Nyamigathi, then scratched his head and told her: "I gave up drinking three years ago".

When Nyamigathi heard that, she got very disappointed because she had planned to get wa-Nduuta tipsy so that it would have been easier for her to tell him what she wanted. She asked wa-Nduuta: "Did you get saved or what?"

"No. I had another important reason when I decided never to drink again"(6).

Nyamigathi did not wait to know the reason. She laughed and told wa-Nduuta: "If you didn't get saved and the doctors didn't prevent you from drinking, then you can

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(5) Ngunuru: first round of beer.

(6) When wa-Nduuta first met Jeneti he insulted her only because he was drunk. The woman called the police and he was taken to the police station. When Jeneti's husband decided not to take him to court, wa-Nduuta swore never to drink again. The whole story is narrated in Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute (cf. Appendix 2.5).

drink my beer. Take it, this is the beer for the child...(7)".

Before she could finish wa-Nduuta cut her short and told her: "I lack a good reason for refusing your beer because I don't want to disappoint you and, since you ask me to take it, I'll do so, but this doesn't mean that I have gone back to drinking".

Wa-Nduuta began to drink the beer and Nyamigathi opened one bottle after the other. They talked and went on drinking.

Thinking of a Bribe

Nyamigathi started the conversation by telling wa-Nduuta that her daughter had told her how well he had explained to her the procedures of employment in that office. She said: "The reason why I wanted to meet you is that you might be in the position to help my child to get that job. She finished her course a year ago and she is still looking for a job. Now I'm getting worried and I'm beginning to wonder who might have cursed us".

Before wa-Nduuta could answer there was a knock at the door, then a man came in and Nyamigathi told

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(7) Ino mitue ta njohi ya mwana: literally "this is like the beer for the child". The Gikuyu brewed traditional beer to celebrate important events. The"beer for the child", njohi ya mwana, was brewed by the bridegroom's family to bless the wedding.

Nyamigathi tells wa-Nduuta that her beer is like the beer for the child probably hinting at the popular saying Njohi ya mwana ndiregagwo, "the beer for the child cannot be refused".

wa-Nduuta: "This is my elder brother. His name is Ruthanju and he is the owner of this house".

Then she told Ruthanju: "And this is the visitor I've told you about. His name is wa-Nduuta and he is the one who helped Mwitumi when she had gone to look for a job this morning".

Ruthanju and wa-Nduuta shook hands and Ruthanju sat down. Nyamigathi gave him a bottle of beer(8) and told him: "I was just telling him about Mwitumi's problem. I was wondering whether he could help us".

Wa-Nduuta told him: "I don't want to deceive you into believing that I can get the girl a job, because that woman has a very bad character(9). If she has decided on the interviews, then interviews there will be. She's looking for somebody who has working experience and the other applicants have it and they are also very clever".

Nyamigathi asked wa-Nduuta what was the woman's name, where she lived and whether she had a husband. Wa-Nduuta answered her: "Her name is Jeneti and her husband is an

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(8) Mucuba wa mbia: "a bottle of beer". Mbia is the way the Gikuyu pronounce the English word "beer". In his writings Gakaara usually writes the Gikuyu word njohi instead of mbia for "beer".

(9) Mutumia ucio witu ni muuru biu: literally "this woman of ours is extremely bad". muuru meaning "bad", "unkind", "quarrelsome", "fierce", "violent", "of bad character". Actually, Jeneti was very kind to wa-Nduuta, because she had employed him (see Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute, Appendix 2.5). It is not clear whether wa-Nduuta is exaggerating on purpose to avoid being involved in the bribing or whether this is really what he thinks of Jeneti (see also note 16).

important lawyer in the governement. They live in Milimani(10) and I also live there in their house".

They had run out of beer and Ruthanju, who sold beer on the black market(11), said: "Nyamigathi, why don't you bring your visitor ten more bottles of beer, they're on me!"

When wa-Nduuta heard that, he asked: "What time do buses stop running here?"

Nyamigathi stood up to go and bring the beer and answered him: "Hey! Do you intend to leave? You are going to sleep here. We have many beds for guests".

Discussing a Bribe

When Nyamigathi got back, she sat down ready to explain to wa-Nduuta the plan that she had devised for her daughter. She told him: "Now tell me, man, are you related to Jeneti or to her husband?"

"I'm related neither to Jeneti, nor to her husband. We just met up in Nairobi, but, since I've been with them for three years, I've come to know them quite well".

Then Nyamigathi told him: "I asked you that because I'd like you to tell us how we can make that woman employ this daughter of ours"(12).

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(10) Milimani: posh area in the outskirts of Nairobi.

(11) Ruthanju sells home-made beer. This is a common illegal activity, especially in ill-famed areas like Kawangware.

(12) Nyamigathi uses the expression "this daughter of .../

Before wa-Nduuta could reply, Ruthanju reinforced Nyamigathi's words by saying: "Look, even if it means giving her something(13), just tell us whether she would accept".

At that moment Mwitumi came in with the chicken, which she had cooked for wa-Nduuta. She put the dish on the table, then left.

Wa-Nduuta thought for a while before answering their questions, then told them this: "As you probably know, such matters are very secretive, and, even if they are given such things, I'm not close(14) to them and they wouldn't want me to know.

"Jeneti is said to be very strict and incorruptible. Everybody in the office respects and fears her and only her boss talks to her.

"I must admit that I fear her and I wouldn't dare mention anything like that to her. But it is said 'that which defies men's efforts has nevertheless been challenged'(15) and we shall try.

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ours" because a child belongs not only to the mother, but also to the whole family.

(13) Kanyamu: "small thing", or more generally, "something"; this word is also used to refer to a thing or object which one does not wish to name.

(14) Nii ndi kuraya muno: literally "I'm very distant (from them)", in the sense of rank and social position as wa-Nduuta is only their driver.

(15) Kirema arume ni kigariure: "That which defies men's efforts has nevertheless been challenged", common Gikuyu saying.

"Now, although we don't speak much to her husband, he isn't as bad as the woman(16), and I think we can try to approach him instead. As he is a man like me, I'll try to talk to him and see whether he can talk to his wife.

Ruthanju approved of the idea and said: "Women are very jealous. If you went straight to her, she might think that you and the girl were having an affair, but if her husband agrees to talk to her, we may be lucky".

Nyamigathi shook her head and said: "Eh, we women always pay for this jealousy! Can you see the man tomorrow morning, so that we'll know what course to take before the interview?"

It was then ten o'clock at night and therefore Ruthanju went home. Wa-Nduuta and Nyamigathi, after taking a few more drinks and getting to know each other better, went to bed, happy because they had come to a decision.

The following morning they woke up and departed to their places of work, after having agreed that wa-Nduuta would go to Nyamigathi's place in the evening to tell her about what Jeneti's husband had decided.

Kiwai wa-Nduuta drove Jeneti to work, then he sat in the car and began to think about how he could arrange to meet Jeneti's husband.

He thought and thought because he did not know how to approach that man and tell him about the secret plan concerning his wife.

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(16) Cf. note 9.

A few times he even thought of leaving the matter be and of going in the evening to Nyamigathi to tell her that Jeneti's husband had refused to talk to his wife.

But then he thought that it would be cowardly and dishonest to do that. At the same time he wanted to keep his new friendship with Nyamigathi and he knew that if he did not fulfil his promise, he would lose that relationship.

He suddenly decided that he would go and see Jeneti's husband that very minute.

He entered the office of Jeneti's husband at around eleven o'clock and found him in.

Although Jeneti's husband was married, he was not very old. He appeared to be a man of integrity(17), even though he looked as if he appreciated the two things that men love(18).

Wa-Nduuta Reveals the Secret

When Jeneti's husband saw wa-Nduuta, he thought that his wife had sent him, so he asked him: "Did the mother of Kigotho(19) send you?"

Wa-Nduuta answered him: "No, I came for my own reasons, although the matter in question concerns her".

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(17) Muburaburiki: literally "restless", "fidgety".

(18) Beer and women.

(19) Nyina wa Kigotho: "the mother of Kigotho". In Gikuyu a woman is called the mother of her first son.

The man told him to take a seat, which he did and then continued: "This is the first time that I talk to you about something concerning the mother of Kigotho, and I'm taking this liberty because I think you are the only one she will listen to".

The man leant back on his seat, took off his glasses and told wa-Nduuta: "Yes, go on".

"Yesterday, at around eight o'clock, a girl I had never seen before came to our office looking for a job as a secretary and I advised her to go and see the mother of Kigotho. After they had talked, it was decided that she would be called together with the other applicants for an interview. The girl's mother, who works as a cleaner for the Municipal Council, was told by her daughter what had happened and so she wanted to see me. You know how such matters concerning employment are conducted here in Nairobi these days.

"This woman lives at Kawangware and I must admit that she has persuaded me to arrange an appointment for her with the mother of Kigotho so that she can do her a certain favour. But, as you probably imagine, I can't think of a way of approaching her in order to talk to her, although I'd like to assist these people.

"I know you are a man like me, and I was brave enough to come to you to tell you such things because I know that you wouldn't hate me for that, and if I'm wrong, please tell me".

Jeneti's husband laughed a bit and asked wa-Nduuta: "What have you been given that you've gained such courage?"

Wa-Nduuta laughed too and answered him: "I can tell you because you're a man like me, but I would be ashamed if the mother of Kigotho knew. I was persuaded to drink beer by that woman and I drank to celebrate(20). You know that it's a long time since I gave up drinking, but I did take the beer and I also spent the night there. But this doesn't mean that I've gone back to drinking again".

Jeneti's husband burst into laughter and asked wa-Nduuta: "Hey! What kind of woman is she that she could make you change your mind so easily? I didn't think that a woman could win you over so easily. If the mother of Kigotho heard this story, she would lose a lot of respect for you".

Ashamed, wa-Nduuta replied: "I'm not the type of man who can be beaten so easily, but this woman won me over. I think it was because I wanted her, but no matter".

"Now", Jeneti's husband told him, "what do you want me to say to the mother of Kigotho?"

Feeling that the man was relenting, wa-Nduuta told him: "If that woman and her brother hear that the girl got the job, you too are going to get something out of it(21)".

Jeneti's husband stood up with his hands in his pockets, took four paces with his head bowed and then sat down again. He told wa-Nduuta this: "According to what you've just said, you were bribed with beer. It was good

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(20) Njohi ya mwana: see note 7.

(21) Ndungiuma ta mundu weetema: literally "you are not going to be injured".

you admitted it, but I want you to know that I don't indulge in these kinds of things. I know that the idea was not yours alone and this means that you mentioned my name while you were drinking, in the way drunkards do. You are in great danger because this would be a good reason(22) for taking you to court. But, as you probably didn't know what you were doing, I can't blame you now.

"I can't go to the mother of Kigotho with such an evil proposal, because it is a great evil to ask her to accept a bribe in her work and I don't even want her to know that you had a meeting to decide how you would bribe her.

"But, while I caution you against doing that, I can offer another solution which doesn't involve bribery".

Don't Let Us Down

The man paused for a while, then asked wa-Nduuta: "Is that girl you want to see employed beautiful?"

Wa-Nduuta explained how beautiful and well-built the girl was, and Jeneti's husband said: "Then, she might be lucky. Bring her tomorrow at ten o'clock, so that I can see her and her certificates".

Even though the last words of Jeneti's husband were not hostile, wa-Nduuta was frightened by the thought of

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(22) Kihooto: "a good reason", "a good argument". This is a key-concept in Gakaara's writings (cf. also Me and Nyarwimbo, Appendix 2.2 and Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute, Appendix 2.5.

being taken to court, so he said: "Maybe you'd better forget the whole business completely".

And the man answered him: "No. If you want that girl to be helped because of your feelings for her mother, she must be employed, but not by the mother of Kigotho".

That evening wa-Nduuta went to Kawangware and told Nyamigathi, her daughter and Ruthanju what had happened. All of them congratulated wa-Nduuta and, although they insisted he should drink some beer, he refused and he also refused to spend the night there. Before leaving, he told Mwitumi where they would meet so that he could take her to the office of Jeneti's husband.

The following morning Mwitumi put on her best dress, put on powder(23) and smeared her body with oil. She made herself beautiful in a big way and she looked extremely attractive. When she was leaving, her mother wished her good luck and told her: "Go well. And watch the way you talk to avoid letting us down in front of that man who felt compassion for you".

When Mwitumi and Jeneti entered the office of Jeneti's husband, they found him talking on the phone. And they heard him say to the person on the line: "In fact the girl has arrived and she should meet the employer".

The amazing thing was that from the moment Mwitumi entered, the eyes of Jeneti's husband did not leave her for one moment while he was talking on the phone.

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(23) Bonda: distorted way in which the Gikuyu pronounce the English word "powder".

Good Looks and Talk

When he finished talking on the phone, wa-Nduuta told him that this was the girl and he went back to his work. Jeneti's husband told Mwitumi to take a seat and asked her: "What's your name, girl?"

"My name is Bethanda Mwitumi".

"Where are your certificates?"

Mwitumi gave him her certificates and the man read them. Then he asked her: "How old are you?"

"I'm sixteen , but I'll be seventeen this year".

"How comes it such a beautiful like you is still unemployed?"

Laughing out of shyness, the girl answered: "I really don't know the reason".

The man told her, looking straight at her: "According to the information I have, your mother struggled to find you a job and now it is your turn to use your skill to find yourself a job. There is no reason why your mother should have raised you, educated you and that she should now take the trouble to find you a job, is there?

"Personally, I feel sorry for your mother. She should be left alone to lead her life without you giving her trouble or asking her for money. If you show that you are a fool, your mother will desert you".

When the discussion reached that point, the girl frowned nervously and began to bite her nails, looking out of the window. The man asked her: "Or is it you don't want to use your beauty?"

The girl could not understand fully those words and said: "I don't quite understand".

Jeneti's husband put his hands on the table and told Mwitumi: "You are not going to work as a typist, you are going to sell clothes in a shop. They need a beautiful girl who speaks good English and Kiswahili. She must be cheerful and polite to people, but, above all, her good looks and talk are important. Aren't you beautiful?"

The girl answered without hesitating: "Maybe, but I'm not the one who should be asked about it".

Then, Jeneti's husband spoke in a strained voice and his expression changed. He cleared his throat and said: "I feel I like you(24), but I don't want you to think that I want your gratitude because I found you a job".

Mwitumi bowed her head and said nothing. The man tried to make her answer something, but Mwitumi remained silent. After a while, Jeneti's husband told her: "I don't think it is wise to keep silent, because I don't know your decision, though I can imagine it. Go now, and come back at three-thirty so that I can take you to the place where you are going to work".

Mwitumi quickly stood up, and looking sideways at the man, she went to the door and said: "Good-bye".

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(24) Nindiraigua ngikwenda: "I feel I like you" or "I feel I want you", as i Gikuyu the verb kwenda means both "to like" and "to want".

It Can't Be So

When Mwitumi met her mother, she told her that it looked as if that man wanted to seduce her, and pursing her lips she asked: "Now, why does he want me? Didn't he say he didn't want to be bribed?"

The mother laughed a bit and told her: "Men do not see it as a bribe. They think a bribe only consists of money, goats, cows or things like that. But now, Mwitumi, how on earth do you expect not to be seduced by men? The important thing is that you know their ways. And you were created with a smooth tongue so that you could outwit them. You can tell this man that it is not that you refuse, but you are not well.

"But you must be very careful not to lose the arrow and the bird(25) because the two can't be cooked in the same pot(26).

At three-thirty, when Mwitumi arrived at that appointment, she got into Jeneti's husband's car and he drove her to her working place. The manager looked at Mwitumi, then he told Jeneti's husband: "I will employ your girl, but I'll do it only because I respect you. There was another one who was very beautiful and she even had a sales certificate, but I told her to wait".

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(25) Kuurwo ni mugui na urwo ni kanyoni: saying meaning "if one wants to shoot a bird, one has to lose the arrow".

(26) (Andu) othe matiarugirwo na nyungu imwe: saying literally meaning "not everybody was cooked in the same pot", or "everybody was made different from the everybody else".

Then he turned to Mwitumi and told her: "Since you have no sales certificate, you'll start on Shs. 600/- and when you learn, it will increase to Shs. 800/-, and, then, it will gradually go up to Shs. 1,500/-".

Then Jeneti's husband said that, since it was past office hours, Mwitumi would report for work the next morning.

When they went back to the car, the girl told the man, while holding on to the door: "I'm very grateful to you for getting me the job...".

But, before she could finish, the man, who was inside the car, told her: "Get in first. We haven't finished our business yet".

The girl winked shyly and told him in a sweet voice the words that she had been told by her mother: "It is not that I refuse, but I don't feel well".

After a small argument about not being well, which Jeneti's husband knew to be a lie, he concluded with these words: "It's alright, Mwitumi, you can go, but you have the gratitude of an ass(34). I'll tell the manager that you are not well and you can't make it to work tomorrow".

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(34) Ngaatho cia bunda: "the gratitude of the ass"; to have "the gratitude of an ass" means to be ungrateful. This expression originated from a folktale that can be summarized as follows: a donkey was in the field when it started raining very hard. So he went to a hut to ask for shelter. The owner told him that the hut was too small for the two of them, but the donkey begged and begged him, till they agreed that the man would open the door so that the donkey could at least shelter his head from the rain. The donkey thanked him, but when the man opened the door, he chased the man away and took the whole hut for himself.

After saying those words he started the car and drove off like an arrow. Mwitumi panicked and tried to stop him, but she had lost her chance with Jeneti's husband.

Mwitumi was left standing there, and, when she thought about what had happened from the beginning, she understood that she might lose her job and a tear ran down her face. Shaking her head she went on her way saying to herself: "Oh! It can't be so... it can't be so... how can I lose the job? It can't be so!"

When she got home, she told her mother how she got a good job, with good pay, and how she did not expect to begin her work the following day. Her mother just stared at her and asked her: "Why? Why refuse a good job like that?"

Mwitumi replied quickly: "Because your advice didn't help me: I told the man I didn't feel well and he got even angrier. When we parted he said that I had the gratitude of an ass and that he would tell the manager I was unwell. Doesn't this mean that I'm not going to start working?"

The mother opened her mouth in shock and asked her daughter: "Oh, Mwitumi! Don't tell me that you really went and repeated my words just like that? You are a grown-up and yet you don't know how get out of the clutches of men? If you lose that job, I'll never bother you again!"

Mwitumi got angry and answered her mother in confused anger: "Wasn't it you who misled me, and now you ...?".

Before she could finish Nyamigathi told her: "Go where you want to! When I was a girl I was not a fool like you. Whose daughter are you?"

Mwitumi got angrier and said, shaking her head: "Ooh! You'll see I'm not what you think! When that driver comes, tell him to give me the telephone number of Jeneti's husband. Before I go to bed tonight, I'll tell him that it was you who advised me to lie to him".

On hearing that, Nyamigathi slapped her thighs and said: "Uuh, Mwitumi, you've really gone mad! And how will you tell him that I meddled with your affairs?"

Mwitumi laughed and answered: "Haven't you just told me that I didn't know how to escape from men? Now I'm going to use you as an excuse for the lies I've told".

Wa-Nduuta arrived at eight o'clock at night. When he was told the news of the man and Mwitumi, he said: "Your daughter is wise. She wants to use you as an excuse so that she can get the job first".

Wa-Nduuta hired a car to go to town and the three of them went there to make the call.

And when Mwitumi and Jeneti's husband spoke on the phone, they came to a compromise and the following morning she went to work with a clean conscience.

THE END

2.7 Summaries of Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine Nos. 1-18

WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING STORIES HAVEN'T YOU READ?
(Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine, No. 19, July 1980, pp. 17-20)

There are a lot of people who have read the stories of Kiwai wa-Nduuta in the Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine and don't want to miss one.

Besides, once people start reading one of these booklets, they wanzt to go on by reading the preceding and following stories.

For those who have never read the stories of wa-Nduuta, we are giving a list of the stories published in the Gikuyu na Mumbi Magazine so that they may decide where to start their collection.

They are:

NO. 1 NDUGETA UNGI MARAYA (Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute)

How wa-Nduuta insulted Jeneti, the wife of a lawyer, and she called the police. Later on wa-Nduuta was the one who rescued Jeneti from thugs and was employed by her. How did it happen?

NO. 2 WA-NDUUTA AKIGURA MWARI (Wa-Nduuta Marries His Daughter)

It was wa-Nduuta who left his wife when she was pregnant. A girl was born who, when grew up, went to work

in Nairobi. She met wa-Nduuta there and they fell deeply in love. Oh! You can read by yourself what happened when wa-Nduuta went to the girl's mother to arrange the payment of the dowry!

NO. 3 WA-NDUUTA NA MURERI WA JENETI (Wa-Nduuta and Jeneti's Maid)

There was a big quarrel because Jeneti employed her sister's daughter to look after her children. Wa-Nduuta, who was Jeneti's driver, also lived at her place. The girl later on fell in love with him and Jeneti found out. The case was heard when the girl had already left and the elders listened to it mouth-opened.

NO. 4 WA-NDUUTA AKIANDIKITHIA MUIRITU (Wa-Nduuta Finds a Job for a Girl)

How wa-Nduuta was bribed by the girl's mother to have the girl employed at Jeneti's office. Later on there was a quarrel because Jeneti's husband was after the girl. See how the man fought with the girl. Had it not been for wa-Nduuta, things would have gone wrong.

NO. 5 WA-NDUUTA NA ITHE WA NJAMBI (wa-Nduuta and Njambi's Father)

The quarrel started because Njambi spoke in English to wa-Nduuta at the shop. When Njambi was sacked from her job, her father got angry. You will not know anything if

you do not read how the father went to fight wa-Nduuta at Jeneti's place because he wanted to have him sacked too.

NO. 6 WA-NDUUTA MAGICOKANWO NA MUKA (wa-Nduuta Is Reconciled with His Wife)

They met in Nakuru when the wife was at law with a man who had tried to steal her daughter's dowry. Wa-Nduuta assisted her and she won the case. Read how they signed an agreement in the presence of a lawyer and Jeneti.

NO. 7 WA-NDUUTA KUHUNITHIA WANGUI (wa-Nduuta Gets Wangui to Have an Abortion)

When the girl who was looking after Jeneti's children in her house got pregnant, wa-Nduuta was deeply troubled. If you have never heard of a medicine man doing an abortion, read about those amazing things. Wa-Nduuta was extremely surprised when Jeneti arrived there.

NO. 8 WA-NDUUTA GUKOMERA MBECA BENGI-INI (wa-Nduuta Lies on the Money in the Bank)

Wa-Nduuta had gone to the bank to withdraw his money. Bank robbers entered the bank and ordered everybody to lie down. One of the robbers dropped a pile of money and wa-Nduuta hid it by lying on it, but a woman, who was near him, saw him do so. Later on the woman's husband was denied any share in the money.

NO. 9 WA-NDUUTA NA JENETI KWIHINGIRA NYUMBA

(wa-Nduuta and Jeneti Locked Themselves into the House)

How Jeneti and wa-Nduuta came home and locked themselves into the house. The people who worked in the house phoned Jeneti's husband and he came home immediately to see what was going on. The police went there too and were cleverly put off.

NO. 10 WA-NDUUTA NA WANGECI MBATHI-INI (wa-Nduuta and Wangeci in the Bus)

How Wangeci talked to wa-Nduuta in the bus which was taking them to Nakuru and told him that she had come to know him when he had taken Jeneti to hospital. Later on Wangeci told wa-Nduuta how she had fallen in love with her brother in Mombasa without knowing he was her brother and how he had got her pregnant. Wangeci and wa-Nduuta slept at the place of Wangeci's mother's place

NO. 11 WA-NDUUTA KUNYITWO NA MUKA WENE (wa-Nduuta Caught with Somebody Else's Wife)

How Wangeci's husband came to know that his wife and wa-Nduuta were in Nakuru, met them at the place of Wangeci's mother and had wa-Nduuta arrested. How the case was ended by Jeneti and her husband in Nairobi.

NO. 12 WA-NDUUTA KUGAYA MBIA NA MBATHITORA (wa-Nduuta Shares the Money with a Pistol)

When Nyambura was told by wa-Nduuta about the money which Jeneti had kept, she got very angry. She made him take a pistol and go to Jeneti's place. How wa-Nduuta and Nyambura had a quarrel about the Thonjore's money and how Thonjore was insulted when the money was on the table.

NO. 13 WA-NDUUTA GUTHITANGWO IHU NI WANGUI (wa-Nduuta Accused of Being Responsible for Wangui's Pregnancy)

How Jeneti and her husband convinced Wangui to accuse wa-Nduuta of her pregnancy because they were angry with him for the story of the pistol, but in the end all of them were outwitted(1) by wa-Nduuta.

NO. 14 WA-NDUUTA KUHONOKIO NI MUHIKI (wa-Nduuta Rescued by the Bride)

Thonjore's son was going to marry Nyamigathi's daughter and wa-Nduuta was invited to the wedding. This was the time Thonjore wanted to take revenge on wa-Nduuta and took out a panga(2), but the bride, Mwitumi, got hold of him so that wa-Nduuta and his relatives could run away.

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(1) In these summaries Gakaara often associates the word waara, "cleverness", "wit", with wa-Nduuta.

(2) Panga (Kiswahili): large chopping knife.

NO. 15 WA-NDUUTA GUTUMA CIANA IHAARANE (wa-Nduuta Made His Daughter and His Son-in-law Quarrel)

How wa-Nduuta's daughter, Roda, quarrelled with her husband Mbuguiro. He had called her father a coward because they had been chased away from Mwitumi's wedding like thieves. Oh! they quarrelled a lot about their parents.

NO. 16 WA-NDUUTA GUTHEKERERWO NI AIRITU (wa-Nduuta Mocked by the Girls)

How at the meeting in Nakuru wa-Nduuta was mocked by Wangu and Njeri. They told the story of how wa-Nduuta had been chased away by Thonjore, but when wa-Nduuta got to know them, Wangu told him the secret of how his case had been ended by Jeneti's people.

NO. 17 WA-NDUUTA NA JENETI HITHO-INI (wa-Nduuta and Jeneti's Secret)

Wa-Nduuta went to Nairobi to learn about his case against Thonjore and Jeneti got hold of him and asked him to give her part of the money because shme had hidden it. They made a secret promise. Read about it.

NO. 18 WA-NDUUTA KUHUBANIRIO NA WANGU (wa-Nduuta Is Caught with Wangu)

In order to bribe Jeneti, wa-Nduuta cheated his wife by saying that he needed money to buy a television set. When he was given the money he took it to Jeneti and then he went to Wangu's place in Nakuru. This is where wa-Nduuta's wife found them asleep, on the top floor of a block of flatas.

2.8 The Danger of the Black European(1)

(Ugwati wa Muthungu Muiru)

1971 (rev. ed. 1978)

WHO IS A BLACK EUROPEAN?

If you are a Gikuyu and you suffer from the disease of speaking English to other Gikuyu when you are not supposed to do so, then you have the colonialist's rooster in your head.

If your head is a slave to the colonialist, then you are a black European. Maybe you are aware of it, but many people ignore that they are black Europeans. This booklet has been written to advise those who do not know.

THE COLONIALIST'S ROOSTER

There is nothing worse than seeing how Gikuyu society has been enslaved by the colonialist and how we have become his slaves. He has stolen our brains and made us believe that our Gikuyu language is not as good as his.

Yes, as the Father of the Nation, the Elder(2) Jomo Kenyatta used to say when we got independence, the colonialist went away, but he left his rooster in our

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(1) The booklet contains five drawings (pp. 5, 9, 14, 17, 20). The drawing on the front cover shows a black man with a rooster inside his head. The caption under the rooster reads: "the colonialist's rooster inside the brain".

(2) Muthee: "elderly and respected man", same as Mzee in Kiswahili.

brains so that it would crow in our minds and make us speak his language even when it is unnecessary(3).

That colonialist's rooster is like a link in the slavery chain. It has spoiled our minds and we are like people who have been bewitched so that we speak English - the language of the colonialist, the language of slavery - even when there are two or three of us together. We have made ourselves black Europeans in a black man's country.

There is no doubt that we have made a lot of progress since we got independence and the whole world has seen it. However, that colonialist's rooster makes the colonialist feel proud because when he sees it, he knows that the link in his chain is still holding very firm.

When the colonialist's rooster has got its claws into the mind of the black people, the Gikuyu contract the disease of speaking the English language(4). As soon as

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(3) I could not find any other reference to this statement by Kenyatta, but Gakaara told me that the president used it often in his speeches. Moi, the present president, who likes to re-echo Kenyatta's words in his public speeches, at times uses his predecessor's expression. The image of the rooster is new because the expression "to have a rooster in the head" does not exist in Gikuyu just as it does not in Kiswahili. In Gikuyu we only find the expression nguku ndaa, "to have a rooster in the stomach" as a result of witchcraft. The rooster is put into the stomach of a person by the witch-doctor (murogi) so that he or she falls ill. It is the work of the medicine-man (mundu mugo) to remove it. Arguably, the rooster eats all the food in the stomach of the bewitched person who weakens and eventually dies. I am not sure of this explanation because none of my informants knew the origin of the expression.

(4) Wa kwaria githungu - kingeretha: literally "of speaking English, the English language". Both githungu and kingeretha mean the English language. The former originated from the word -thungu, European, the latter is a Gikuyu rendering of the English word "English", -ngeretha.

the rooster crows in their minds, even if they are speaking to other Gikuyu, they forget that they are Gikuyu and they unwillingly turn to the language of the colonialist. This is what speaking English when it is unnecessary means.

BOY, SON OF DADDY(5)

Before we go on to see how we have become slaves of the colonial language, let me tell you what are some of the mistakes brought about by the colonialist's rooster.

We, pure Gikuyu, are lost in the bush if a husband and his wife in their home address each other with colonial pride "hallo darling"(6), or "my dear"(7), instead of calling each other mwemdwa [my beloved], or, in polite Gikuyu, nyina wa [mother of] or ithe wa [father of] so and so.

Similarly, parents who have the colonialist's rooster in their minds lead their children astray by teaching them to say "daddy"(8) or "mummy"(9), instead of teaching them awa [father] and maitu [mother]. Those children become

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(5) Mbooi wa Ndandi: Gikuyu rendering of the English words "boy" and "daddy"; wa, literally "of", may also mean "son/daughter of".

(6) Haru ndari: Gikuyu rendering of the English "hallo darling".

(7) Mai ndia: Gikuyu rendering of the English "my dear".

(8) Ndandi: Gikuyu rendering of the English word "daddy".

(9) Mami: Gikuyu rendering of the English word "mummy".

black Europeans at a young age and small colonial slaves without being aware of it. Whose mistake is that?

Imagine that those children become used to being called "boy"(10) and "baby"(11). They are thus deprived of their real names such as Kamau or Njeeri(12). They grow up ignoring their Gikuyu names. Why?

To make matters even worse, the same child is taught to be called "boy son of daddy"(13) or "baby son of mummy"(14). Similarly, they get lost in that slavery even further and they do not know how to address their relatives tatawe [maternal aunt], mamawe [maternal uncle], ithe mukuru [elder uncle](15), nyina mukuru [elder aunt](16) or munyinyi [younger]. They call them "uncle(17) so and so" or "aunt(18) so and so".

Even without mentioning all the relatives of those children, isn't it a shame that they do not know how to

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(10) Mbooi: Gikuyu rendering of the English word "boy".

(11) Mbembi: Gikuyu rendering of the English word "baby".

(12) Kamau is a very common Gikuyu name for men, as Njeeri is very common for women.

(13) Cf. note 5.

(14) Mbembi wa mami: Gikuyu rendering of the English words "baby" and "mummy".

(15) Ithe mukuru: "his/her/their elder uncle"; "my elder uncle" is translated baba mukuru.

(16) Nyina mukuru: "his/her/their elder aunt"; "my elder aunt" is translated maitu mukuru.

(17) Anko: Gikuyu rendering of the English word "uncle".

(18) Anti: Gikuyu rendering of the English word "aunt".

say guuka [grandfather] or wagui [grandfather](19) and cuucu [grandmother]? They call their grandfathers "grandfather of daddy"(20)or "grandfather of mummy(21)" and their grandmothers "grandmother of mummy(22)" or "grandmother of daddy"(23).

These are only a few examples which show how the colonialist's rooster makes us remain in the chains of the colonialist's language. These chains keeps us in slavery and in danger of becoming black Europeans in our very homes and with our own children.

FIRST ASK YOURSELF

Even without exaggerating and saying that English should never be spoken, don't you think that we have been enslaved by the language of the colonialist and that he has cheated us badly if when there are two or more Gikuyu together (even without there being anybody of another nationality with them) they speak English from the beginning to the end of their conversation?

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(19) Guuka and wagui both mean "my grandfather".

(20) Ngirandibatha wa ndandi: Gikuyu rendering of the English words "grandfather" and "daddy".

(21) Ngirandibatha wa mami: Gikuyu rendering of the English words "grandfather" and "mummy".

(22) Ngirandimatha wa ndandi: Gikuyu rendering of the English words "grandmother" and "daddy".

(23) Ngirandimatha wa mami: Gikuyu rendering of the English words "grandmother" and "mummy".

Why do you think they don't respect their own language? Most of the time it is not because they really do not want to, but they do so because they are oppressed by the colonialist's rooster up to the point that they have come to hate their mother tongue.

Now ask yourself: have you ever heard two Englishmen talk in another language when they are together? Have you ever heard two Indians or Arabs talk in Gikuyu, Kiswahili, or even English? And you, Gikuyu, why are you giving in to a foreign language so easily?

Don't you think that you have been cheated, even if you master the English language, whether you are rich, or a hero or you are an important leader? Question yourself to find out if you are one of those people mentioned above.

THE LANGUAGE OF BOASTING

We will call English the language of boasting because, otherwise, how can you explain that the Gikuyu speak English when they want to show that they are great people or that they are superior or important for some reason, or when they want other people to know that they are more educated? In short, how comes it that when people want to show off in one way or another they start using English?

For example: go to the places where people drink beer in Gikuyuland, where there isn't people from other other ethnic groups, and you will find that, before people get drunk, they speak in good Gikuyu, but, after a few drinks,

you will hear them speaking English. You will see that even those people who do not know how to speak English, they start using colonial words here and there, when they get drunk.

To make matters worse, when these people want to abuse another person, they use English words(24), such as "Damn you!"(25) or "bastard!"(26), or "go to hell!"(27) and so on. Similarly, when they greet people, they say "how are you?"(28) and when they answer a greeting, they say "I'm alright"(29).

Doesn't it show that they think their Gikuyu doesn't make them appear great, or important, or better than what they are?

THE LANGUAGE OF TRADITION

This slavery of our language has affected the way the Gikuyu think in several ways. One of the worst things to see is that the Gikuyu have lost their customs.

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(24) This is what wa-Nduuta does in Don't Call Anybody a Prostitute, Appendix 2.5.

(25) Ndembuu: Gikuyu rendering of the English "damn you".

(26) Mbathitand: Gikuyu rendering of the English "bastard".

(27) Nguu-tuhero: Gikuyu rendering of the English "go to hell".

(28) Hawayuu: Gikuyu rendering of the English "how are you".

(29) Amorait: Gikuyu rendering of the English "I'm alright".

The colonialist with his rooster has managed to deceive us into thinking that our customs are not proper, whilst everybody in the world knows that the pride of a people in their own country is to know and to hold firm to the customs of their society.

But how can you know the customs of the Gikuyu if you don't want to speak the Gikuyu language? How can you know Gikuyu traditions(30), if you only speak English? How can you know how to show respect to elderly Gikuyu people, if you hate your own language?

It is very sad that there are some Gikuyu who feel embarassed or uneasy when they greet others with proper Gikuyu greetings. They feel that those greetings are for uncivilized people. Greetings such as wakia maitu? [how are you, who are my mother's agemate], or wakia awa? [how are you who are my father's agemate], or wanyua awa? [how are you who are my father's agemate](31).

There is no need to look for excuses like saying that they do not know the proper Gikuyu greetings because they live in town. Does it mean that there are no elderly Gikuyu people there? Why don't you greet one another with the appropriate Gikuyu greeting, like people from the other ethnic groups do?

Kirira: law and custom regulating rites, ceremonies and social conduct.

(31) This is the appropriate greeting for a child who is addressing a grown-up. Gakaara explains the appropriate forms of greeting for every occasion in his textbook Thooma Giigikuyu Kiega: Ibuku ria Gatatu "A", (Learn Good Gikuyu: Book Three "A"), March 1986, rev. ed. January 1988, pp. 24-5.

You Gikuyu, train your tongue to greet elders with wakia maitu? [how are you, who are my mother's agemate?] or wakia awa? [how are you, who are my father's agemate?], as the Swahili in town greet one another with shikamoo and marahaba(32). If your tongue cannot pronounce wakia maitu [how are you, who are my mother's agemate] or wakia awa-ri [how are you, who are my father's agemate], don't you think that it is because the colonialist's rooster is crowing loudly in your brain?

In some Gikuyu districts, especially Nyeri and Kirinyaga, those greetings are still firmly rooted. This is possible because elderly people, especially the women, when their young relatives greet them with disrespectful greetings such as uri mwega? [how are you?] or ni atia ithe wa ng'ania [how are you, father of so and so?], they refuse to answer them because they are not of the same age-group(33).

Often if young men or women do not greet an elderly woman of their mother's age-group with the proper respectful greeting, they are fined. If they are strangers, who do not know Gikuyu greetings, they are taught them so that they can avoid being laughed at.

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(32) Shikamoo, literally "I am at your feet", is a greeting in Kiswahili used in addressing a person who is somewhat superior to the speaker (in age or socially). The answer to this greeting is marahaba, a word of Arabic origin.

(33) The above greetings can be exchanged only by agemates and cannot be used by a child to greet an elderly man or woman.

I DON'T KNOW GIKUYU

It is a shameful thing to hear people, who are Gikuyu from head to toe, say openly that they do not know Gikuyu and say it in Gikuyu. If you ask them why they do not know Gikuyu, they will answer that Gikuyu is harder than English.

Some give other reasons. They will say for instance that they have been brought up in Nairobi or Mombasa and so they were not taught Gikuyu. This only shows that they are not interested in learning how to read and write it. They can speak Gikuyu without stammering and they can also write a bit, but since they have the colonialist's rooster in their minds, they do not think of themselves as Gikuyu.

Let's leave aside fake reasons like those mentioned above and others such as "Gikuyu hasn't got enough vocabulary to enable people to express themselves fully", All this only shows that, the colonialist's rooster makes them prefer its language to theirs.

If you have not learned to speak Gikuyu, do not despise your language and say that it is not good only because you cannot speak it well.

IN OFFICES

Since Kiswahili is the language of Eastern and Central Africa, all ethnic groups in Kenya have agreed that Kiswahili should be the national language and should be used in offices where there are people from different ethnic groups. All the same, we cannot deny that English

is one of the most important languages in the world. That is why English is used to put Kenyans into contact with the outside world and why it is learned by so many people.

In this country English is used in courts of law because up to now most law books have been written in the colonialist's language. But why, in a law suit between two Gikuyu, where the judge is also a Gikuyu, should they use English? Why should there be a Gikuyu interpreter when the public is only made up of Gikuyu?

It is right for the people who work in courts of law or in offices to speak English when there are people from different ethnic groups, but this cannot be a good reason for a Gikuyu to speak English to his fellow Gikuyu when they are alone in that same office.

If they do that, it is because they are oppressed by the colonialist's rooster of slavery, which deprives them of their minds without their even realizing it.

IS THERE A HALF-GIKUYU?

We do not think that there is a Gikuyu who would like to be called half-Gikuyu and half-European. This means that those Gikuyu who are enslaved by the colonialist's language are not aware of it. They cannot see the danger of throwing away their language and beliefs. They do not realize they are doing so because they have the colonialist's rooster in their minds.

Now, if at your place of work you always speak English, if at home you speak English, if you discuss with

other Gikuyu in English, isn't it true that you have been captured and enslaved by the English language?

Don't you think that you have rejected the language that belongs to you, that you have married the colonialist, without receiving a dowry?

There is no doubt that if the Gikuyu do as those half-Gikuyu who speak English all the time, in 100 years' time all Gikuyu will be married to Englishmen.

Take the example of Goans [in Kenya]. They lost their language because, to seem more important, they talked too much in English.

What is the outcome of that boasting? Today all Goans always speak English. They have all become slaves of the colonialist's language, old and young. All of them always speak English. Is it right for the Gikuyu to end up like them?

If we do not want to lose our language completely, let us stop pretending we are high-class people by speaking English. If we go on being cheated in this way, in the years to come there will be no pure Gikuyu who know their language properly, but only Gikuyu with the colonialist's rooster in their minds.

IT HASN'T GOT A LARGE ENOUGH VOCABULARY

Anthropologists have discovered that when a people adopt a foreign language, they end up being slaves to the foreign people who are the owners of the language they use. For this reason the Gikuyu will become slaves to the British.

Those who adopt the foreign language, feel happy when they speak English or do things in the English way for they claim to understand English better than Gikuyu. For example, they listen to English music on the radio, they write letters in English, read English books, or preach the word of God in English and so on.

It has been discovered that those who are enslaved in this way, can get used to many other colonialist things which are related to the language they use. Little by little they become alienated from their customs and traditions and also from their traditional celebrations. In the end, they are even denied their national liberty and they lose political control to the foreigners - all this as a result of using a foreign language.

These Gikuyu are the ones who argue emptly saying that Gikuyu has not got a large enough vocabulary to express the ideas they have in mind clearly. If there was no English language in Kenya, what language would they be speaking, if not Gikuyu?

STULTIFYING OUR BELIEFS

In the old days, before the coming of the colonialist, the Gikuyu lived according to their traditions and respected them.

But in the last 60 years, since the colonisalist arrived in Kenya, the Gikuyu have almost lost their traditions and customs. The colonialist's aim was to create black Europeans in every way so as to make the Gikuyu slaves of the white man for ever.

To achieve that, the colonialist not only stultified our language, but also our traditional belief in God.

The Gikuyu were deceived into believing that the colonialist's religion was better than theirs. They were forced to believe that praying God facing Mount Kenya(34) was a foolish thing, whereas he himself believes that God lives far, far above the mountains, for example above Mount Sinai where he gave the [Ten] Commandments to man.

The Gikuyu were confused and abandoned their traditional beliefs for no reason. They abandoned their sacrifices under the fig tree(35), although nobody has ever been able to explain why praying under the fig tree is wrong.

Nobody can give a good reason why God would be more likely to answer prayers concluding with the colonialist's word "amen", than prayers which end with "kurotuika guo" [let it be so] or "Thaai thathaiya Ngai, thaai" [mercy, entreat God, mercy".

It is a good thing that nowadays the Gikuyu have opened their eyes and have realized that to be given a colonialist's [Christian] name before their [Gikuyu first] name is an effect of the colonialist's rooster. If you pray to God calling yourself Chege or Njeri, your prayers will be answered just like those of the colonialists who pray to God and call themselves John or Mary.

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(34) The Gikuyu used to pray God facing Mount Kenya (hence the title of Jomo Kenyatta's book on Gikuyu traditions).

(35) The fig tree, mugumo, is the sacred tree of the Gikuyu people. They used to pray and offer their sacrifices under the fig tree.

The Gikuyu have also realized that "the God of our Fathers" does not only refer to "Abraham and Isaac" or "Mohamed". But "the God of our fathers", blood of our blood, refers to our ancestors "Gikuyu and Mumbi" and many others like "Ndemi and Mathathi"(36).

For this reason we must strenghten our beliefs so that we reveal the law of our Creator, the Omnipotent, the law to honour our true ancestral parents.

BEING LED ASTRAY AT SCHOOL

We cannot forget that, before fighting the colonialist and gaining independence with our own efforts, the Gikuyu had to struggle to learn English and study hard at school for a long time.

By learning English the colonialist's rooster was forced into their heads and they came to believe that, just as the colonialist was a great man, so was his language. Similarly, the Gikuyu who learned English at school, thought that they would become more important, just like the Europeans; they forgot that they would never become white men, but merely black Europeans.

But listen, what did we see after independence? Some clever colonialists succeeded in keeping colonialism in

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(36) Ndemi and Mathathi are the names of two ruling generation sets in the XVIII century (according to Muriuki, see op. cit. p. 21). The expression Ndemi na Mathathi (Ndemi and Mathathi) may mean, in a different context, simply "long, long ago". The only specific work on the Gikuyu age-class system is H.E. Lambert's Kikuyu Social and Political Institutions (London, Oxford University Press 1956).

our country, in the Educational Department of our government, and decided that all Gikuyu children should be taught in English immediately after entering school.

It was decided that school teachers would speak the colonialist's language to children whether they understood it or not.

For this reason Gikuyu children who began their schooling, started becoming small black Europeans. They forgot Gikuyu, their mother tongue, the language they should have been proud of more than any other language. Can you imagine what happened to their Gikuyu by the time they grew up?

FIGHTING THE COLONIALIST'S PLAN

The Gikuyu say that "nothing can escape the trapper"(37). In the year 1970 the Gikuyu experts of that time rejected the colonialist's plan because they could see that the colonialist was going to destroy the Gikuyu language completely. He wanted us to live in his bag, while he was claiming that we had got independence.

That plan was soon defeated by the black people of the Education Department. They decided that Gikuyu children should start being taught to read and to write in their mother tongue(38).

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(37) Ngerera thi ndiagaga mutegi: Gikuyu saying literally meaning "anything that walks on earth can be caught by the trapper".

(38) Actually, Kenyan children are taught in their mother tongue (up to Standard III) only in the rural areas.

We should therefore thank the leaders of the Education Department of that time because, although the colonialist went on interfering with our language, the Gikuyu tried to stop the colonialist's rooster from being forced into the heads of our children, as was happening at that time.

THE DISEASE OF MIXING LANGUAGES

Psychologists say that when people get used to a certain habit, that habit affects their minds until it becomes a disease called a "self-created disease"(39).

There is no doubt that the Gikuyu who suffer from this self-created disease are those more used to speaking English than Gikuyu. They have become slaves of the colonialist's rooster and that's why they speak English even when they are not supposed to do so.

It has been noted that people who have got that disease after a short while cannot help using some English words, even when they try to speak Gikuyu.

The sad thing is that, the more those ill people try not to speak English, the more their disease forces them to use English words.

The Gikuyu use English words while speaking Gikuyu because they have been enslaved by the colonialist's rooster which forces them to think that if they use

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(39) Mirimu ya kwiigirira: "psychological problems", literally "self-created diseases". Gakaara dedicated a whole booklet to psychological problems (see 11. 1 and 11.12).

English words their Gikuyu will be better understood. Have you ever heard Gikuyu people mixing words as follows?

"This is not a problem for my wife".
"In fact, I don't know it at all".
"Your grandma is not very old, as ours is"(40).
"I love you so much, more than anybody else".
"Imagine such an old man not being given respect".
"I believe everything is alright".
"I want my children to be always smart and clean".
"On Monday many people suffer from hangover".
"Mummy, bring us bananas and bread".
"These children of today do not have good manners towards elderly people".
"I was tired in such a way that I couldn't eat my lunch well"(41).
"If you had told me before hand, I would have asked my husband to give you a lift".

These people who use English words confuse their interlocutors, especially if they talk to people who do not know English and thus cannot get the whole message.

Let us see an example of how a Gikuyu, who has the colonialist's rooster in his or her mind, introduces people at a wedding where many men and women do not understand English:

"Let me introduce you to the bridegroom's father in law, that man who is sitting on the right side of the bride. I'm going to ask him to give a short speech".

Another person, who was the Chairman of the Parents' School Committee, spoke like this at a meeting:

"Here today at this meeting, as the chairman of the School Committee, I would like to talk about the behaviour

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(40) This example shows a construction which is not well-formed according to the rules of English grammar.

(41) See preceding note.

of our children who are boarding because this is one of our general duties".

THE GIKUYU LANGUAGE

It is known that no Gikuyu can speak English well unless he or she studied it, but there are also a few people who, although they did not studied it in school, can speak English because they had been with English people for a long time.

Linguists maintain that, even people who learned to speak a foreign language, cannot speak it as well as if it was their mother tongue, pronouncing it correctly and without making mistakes.

This means that, apart from those Gikuyu who were born and brought up in Europe and so speak a foreign language, there are no Gikuyu who can speak like the colonialist with the right pronunciation and without making mistakes.

Similarly, a colonialist who studies Gikuyu, even for many years, will never speak Gikuyu [like a Gikuyu].

Therefore, it is wrong to say that a certain Gikuyu speaks English like an Englishman, or to laugh at a Gikuyu who cannot speak English properly because it is impossible for a Gikuyu to speak English like an Englishman, no matter how many degrees he or she obtained.

Besides not laughing at a Gikuyu who does not know or cannot speak English, we should not praise a Gikuyu who addresses other Gikuyu in English because that would encourage him or her to continue.

HOW CAN WE PREVENT IT?

It is not very difficult to solve this problem.

Firstly, it is necessary for those Gikuyu who have been enslaved into speaking English to admit that they are wrong. Then they must convince themselves that they must fight the conditioning that makes them speak English when they are not supposed to.

They must take the resolution (and stick to it) that, whenever they talk to other Gikuyu, they will try to forget English. And when they speak English they must be aware of the fact that they are doing wrong to their people because they are contributing to the disappearance of our important language.

Secondly, the teaching of Gikuyu must be emphasized by school teachers. Nowadays Gikuyu is taught at school up to Standard III, but it should be taught up to Standard VIII, when the children are older; they should be examined in Gikuyu, so that they would put some effort in studying it.

Thirdly, we Gikuyu must understand that it is our work at home to stop our children from using the colonialist's words such as "daddy", "boy", "uncle"(42), or grandma.

If we do the above, then we can prevent our being colonized and we shall not be slaves of another language

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(42) Ndandi, mbooi, anko: Gikuyu rendering of the English words "daddy", "boy" and "uncle".

and we shall show our bravery in protecting our Gikuyu language from disappearance in time.

THE END

APPENDIX 3: BIBLIOGRAPHIES OF GIKUYU STUDIES

Since there are no bibliographies of the available material on the Gikuyu people and language, I decided to include in this appendix the bibliographies I collected in the course of my study.

There is a certain confusion in the writing of Gikuyu names. In books Ngugi wa Thiong'o is usually listed under Ngugi, although this is his first name, the only recent exception being Ingrid Bjorkman's book on Ngugi's theatre(1), where Ngugi is listed under his surname, Thiong'o. Meja Mwangi, in contrast, is always listed under Mwangi.

Further confusion is created by the fact that some people use wa "son/daughter of" before their family name, or to be precise, their father's name, writing it either as a separate word (like wa Thiong'o) or as part of their family name (like Wamwere) and thus some authors list their works under Wa. Karega Mutahi uses Karega Mutahi on one occasion (his book on linguistics) and Karega wa Mutahi on another (in the collection of Gikuyu oral literature he edited)(2).

Gakaara's name constitutes a further problem because he uses wa twice, first as a separate word and then as part of his family name. That is why Patrick Bennett prefers to write Gakaara's name Gakaara wa Njau, in spite

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(1) Mother, Sing for Me: People's Theatre in Kenya, London, Zed 1989.

(2) On Mutahi's books, see Appendices 3.1 and 3.4.

of the fact that Gakaara calls himself Gakaara wa Wanjau. Since this problem is not officially solved in Kenya, I prefer to list Gikuyu names under the name commonly employed by the authors themselves and thus write, for instance, Gakaara and Ngugi.

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MacGregor, A.W. (CMS)(3), A Grammar of the Kikuyu Language, London, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge 1904.

Bertagna, Rodolfo (IMC)(4), Primi elementi di lingua Kikuyu (First Elements of the Gikuyu Language), Nyeri, cyclostyled 1906.

Bernhard, R. (HGF)(5), Grammaire Kikuyu (Gikuyu Grammar), Nairobi, Catholic Mission 1908.

Henderson, J.R. (AIM)(6), "Easy Kikuyu Lessons", The Times, Nairobi(7).

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(1) HGF: Holy Ghost Fathers. On Hémery see 1.6.

(2) The booklet contains a short English-Gikuyu vocabulary. It seems that a Consolata Father, Filippo Perlo, translated Hémery's handbook into Italian (see 1.6). We could not trace the Italian translation, unless it does not appear under Perlo's name, but simply under Missionari della Consolata (cf. the title listed in this section).

(3) CMS: Church Missionary Society. On the A.W. MacGregor see 1.4.

(4) IMC: Istituto Missioni Consolata, Consolata Fathers. On the Consolata Fathers see 1.6.

(5) On Bernhard see 1.6.

(6) AIM: African Inland Mission. On the AIM see 1.5.

(7) Barlow includes Henderson's articles in his bibliography of "the works on the Kikuyu language which have been published". The reference, which reads "Easy Gikuyu Lessons. Arranged by Jno. E. Henderson, M.D., of

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Arese, Mario (IMC), Elementi di grammatica Kikuyu (Elements of Gikuyu Grammar), Torino, cyclostyled 1910.

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Ghilardi, Valentino (IMC), A Simple Kikuyu Grammar, Nyeri, Consolata Catholic Mission Printing School n.d.(10)

Merlo Pick, Vittorio (IMC)(11), Elementi di grammatica Gekoyo (Elements of Gikuyu Grammar), Nyeri, Consolata Catholic Mission Printing School 1938; rev. ed. according to the UKLC orthography, Elementi di grammatica Gikuyu (Elements of Gikuyu Grammar), Torino, cyclostyled, 1975.

Armstrong, Lilias E., The Phonetic and Tonal Structure of Kikuyu, London, Oxford University Press 1940; repr. London, Dawson of Pall Mall 1967.

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the African Inland Mission. ('The Times,' Nairobi.)", is incomplete and so is Barlow's bibliography which 2 contains only nine items (Tentative Studies in Kikuyu Grammar and Idiom, p. iv) Since Barlow lists the works in order of publication and Henderson's articles appear after Bernhard's booklet, they must date from 1908. We could not find any other reference to Henderson's articles.

(8) CSM: Church of Scotland Mission. On A. Ruffell Barlow see 1.3.

(9) For the revised edition, see: Studies in Kikuyu Grammar and Idiom.

(10) In the acknowledgements the author writes that he was "deeply indebted to V.A. Ottaway". It means that the booklet must date before the Second World War, when Ottaway was Education Officer.

(11) His family name was Merlo Pich, but he used to write it Pick instead of Pich in order to retain the Italian pronunciation, ch in Italian being pronounced like ck in English.

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Mutahi, Karega E., Sound Change and the Classification of the Dialects of Southern Mt. Kenya, Berlin, Dietrich Reiner Verlag 1983(15).

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(12) Barlow's grammar contains a brief English-Kikuyu Kikuyu-English vocabulary which only lists the words used in the grammar for reference (pp. 227-254).

(13) The Eagle Press was part of the East African Literature Bureau. We read in the back cover of the book that the work of The Eagle Press was "the production of books for Africans and the establishment of libraries". On the East African Literature Bureau, see 1.11.

(14) T. G. Benson was a Lecturer in Bantu Languages at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London (see also Appendix 3.2).

(15) The book is a revised edition of the author's Ph.D. thesis presented at the University of Nairobi in 1977. He was a lecturer in the Linguistics Department at Nairobi University. He is co-editor, with Wanjiku Mukabi Kabira, of a collection of Gikuyu oral literature (see bibliography of recent collections of Gikuyu oral literature under Kabira). On Karega Mutahi and Gakaara see 5.6 and 6.5.

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Bergvall, Victoria Lee, Focus in Kikuyu and Universal Grammar, Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Linguistics, Harvard University, 1987(17).

3.2 Dictionaries

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MacGregor, A.W. (CNS), English-Kikuyu Vocabulary, London, Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge 1904.

Missionari della Consolata (Consolata Fathers), Vocabolario della lingua Gekoyo (Dictionary of the Gikuyu Language), Torino 1910.

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(16) The course contains four essays on the structure of Gikuyu. All readings are from: Gakaara's Agikuyu, Mau Mau na Wiyathi (The Gikuyu, Mau Mau and Freedom/Independence), Gecau's Kikuyu Folktales, Kenyatta's Facing Mount Kenya, Kabetu's Kirira kia Ugikuyu (Gikuyu Beliefs), Gathigira's Ng'ano na Thimo cia Ugikuyu (Gikuyu Folktales and Proverbs), and Muriuki's A History of the Kikuyu: 1500-1900.

(17) The bibliography contained in this study only lists recent studies on the Gikuyu language.

(18) Hildegarde Hinde wrote also: Some Problems of East Africa, London, Williams and Norgate 1926; The Masai Language: Grammatical Notes Together with a Vocabulary, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1901; and, with her husband Sidney Langford Hinde, The Last of Masai, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1901. Dr Sidney Langford Hinde was a British officer.

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Ghilardi, Valentino (IMC)(23), Dizionario Gekoyo-italiano (Gikuyu-Italian Vocabulary), typescript, Rocho 1936; cyclostyled, Koffiefontein, South Africa(24) 1943; Nyeri, Consolata Catholic Mission Printing School, 1944.

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Barlow, Arthur Ruffell (CSM) comp.; Benson, T. G. ed., English-Kikuyu Dictionary, Oxford, Clarendon Press 1975(25).

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(19) Cravero wrote numerous religious booklets and catechisms in Gikuyu.

(20) The Consolata Fathers taught Latin in their training college for priests.

(21) L. J. Beecher became Archbishop of the Kenya Province of the Anglican Church. S.B. Beecher was his wife. On Beecher see 1.4.

(22) Present day Murang'a.

(23) Valentino Ghilardi collected several Gikuyu folktales and traditional songs, but published only a few.

(24) During the Second World War Fr. Ghilardi, with many other Consolata missionaries, was interned for three years (1940-4) at Koffiefontein, an internment camp in South Africa where prisoners from Kenya, Uganda and Tanganyika were moved. During his internment Ghilardi worked on this precious vocabulary which counts 699 cyclostyled pages. T.G. Benson in his Kikuyu-English Dictionary (Oxford, Clarendon Press 1964) acknowledges the help given by Ghilardi: "The Rev Fr. Ghilardi of the Catholic Mission, Imenti, not only agreed to forgo publication of a separate dictionary on which he had been working, but willingly offered assistance by answering queries on difficult words" (acknowledgements, p. vii).

(25) Barlow died in 1965 and Benson took over in the compilation of the English-Kikuyu dictionary.

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Gorman, T.P., A Glossary in English, Kiswahili, Kikuyu and Dholuo, London, Cassell 1972.

Gachathi, F.N., Kikuyu Botanical Dictionary of Plant Names and Uses, Nairobi, AMREF 1989.

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(26) B. Mareka Gecaga published also a collection of Gikuyu riddles and folktales (see 3.4) and a booklet of fiction illustrating Gikuyu customs, Kariuki na Muthoni (Kariuki and Muthoni), Nairobi, CMS Bookshop 1946, which was published in English in 1949 by The Eagle Press (East African Literature Bureau) under the title Home Life in Kikuyuland or Kariuki and Muthoni, Nairobi, The Eagle Press (East African Literature Bureau) 1949.

Gecaga was a mission-educated Gikuyu. In 1944 he was sent to Makerere College in Uganda by a British company as part of a new government policy. "After the Second World War the government saw the need to train Africans for executive positions as administrative assistants in the administration. A few employers in the private sector led the way in the employment of Africans with a view to their becoming executives and colleagues of Europeans. The first to enter this field was Bovill Matheson and Co., who paid for the education of two Africans at Makerere" (Frost, Richard, op. cit., p. 255). Gecaga "was subsequently helped by a European friend to read for the bar in London and became a barrister, director of companies and chairman of the Council of the University of Nairobi" (Ibidem, p. 255). He was a close associate of Kenyatta and married one of his daughters. On Gecaga, see also 1.10.

(27) B. Mareka Gecaga and W. Kirkaldy-Willis (a British orthopaedic surgeon) were among the founders of the United Kenya Club in Nairobi. It was "the first voluntary association providing facilities for social mixing on equal terms by members of the different races. The founders of the Club wanted to provide a place where they and other people could meet as friends in a town where no other meeting place was available" (Frost, Richard, op. cit., p. 70; among the founders of the Club was also Thomas G. Askwith, at different times Municipal Affair Officer in Nairobi and Commissioner for Local Government.

(28) This vocabulary was originally written to accompany the Short Kikuyu Grammar and then it was published separately by the Eagle Press in Nairobi because "it was thought that it would be of general use as well, in the absence of any other vocabulary or dictionary in the Kikuyu language". The first part, English-Kikuyu, counts 37 pages; the second, Kikuyu-English, counts 31 pages

3.3 Bibliography of Studies on the Gikuyu People

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Hobley, Charles W., "Kikuyu Medicines", Man: A Monthly Record of Anthropological Science, No. 54, 1906, pp. 81-3.

Hobley, Charles W. "Notes on the Dorobo People and Other Tribes; Gathered from Chief Karuri and Others", Man: A Monthly Record of Anthropological Science, Vol. 6, No. 78, 1906, pp. 119-20(29).

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Routledge, W.S. and K., With a Prehistoric People: the Agikuyu of British East Africa, London, Frank Cass 1910(30).

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(29) The article is not centred on the Gikuyu. It also discusses the Maasai and Nandi.

(30) Cf. Vittorio Merlo Pick, op. cit., 1973.

Bugeau, F., "La circoncision chez les Kikuyus (British East Africa)", Anthropos, 1911, pp. 616-627.

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Tate, H.R., "Further Notes on the Southern Gikuyu of British East Africa", Journal of African Society, Vol. 10, 1911, pp. 285-97.

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Dundas C., "The Organization and Laws of Some Bantu Tribes in East Africa (Kamba, Kikuyu, Tharaka)", Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, Vol. 45, 1915, pp. 234-306.

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(31) I was not able to complete the reference.

(32) The book contains beautiful photographs and a number

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of Gikuyu proverbs (pp. 214-225). See also Appendix 3.4 under Barra.

(33) The book had been circulating in manuscript form since 1938. It was published posthumously by Leakey's wife and precious assistant, Mary.

(34) Stanley Kiama Gathigira was Inspector for Schools in 1928-1935, see also 1.10.

(35) I was not able to complete the reference.

(36) Matthew Njoroge Kabetu was the first secretary of the Kikuyu Association formed in 1920. He worked with Canon Leakey on a Gikuyu translation of the Bible, see 1.4. Kabetu also wrote a booklet of fiction illustrating Gikuyu customs, Kaguraru na Waithira (Kaguraru and Waithira), which was published by the East African Literature Bureau in 1961.

Ghilardi, Valentino (IMC), "Religione e credenze degli Aghekoyo" (Religion and Beliefs of the Gikuyu), Annali Lateranensi, Vol. XIX, 1955, pp. 333-348.

Ghilardi, Valentino (IMC), "La circoncisione o irua presso i Ghekoyo" (Circumcision or Irua among the Gikuyu), Africa: Journal of the International African Institute, 1956(?)(37).

Lambert, H.E., Kikuyu Social and Political Institutions, London, Oxford University Press 1956(38).

Gakaara wa Wanjau, Wikumie na Muhiriga Waku (Be Proud of Your Clan), Nairobi, Equatorial Publishers January 1961; 2nd ed. January 1963; 3rd rev. ed. Mihiriga ya Agikuyu (The Gikuyu Clans) March 1967; 4th ed. Gakaara Press, November 1980.

Muriuki, Godfrey, A History of the Kikuyu: 1500-1900, Oxford, Oxford University Press 1974; Nairobi, Oxford University Press 1987(39).

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(37) I was not able to complete the reference.

(38) This is the only work centred on the Gikuyu age-class system, an extremely interesting and rather unexplored topic which deserves the attention of scholars in anthropology. H.E. Lambert collected the material for his study during his residence in Kenya as an Administrative Officer.

(39) Muriuki's book grew out of his Ph.D. thesis which was presented to the University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, in 1969. It was the first (and last) systematic attempt to collect and analyse the historical traditions of the Gikuyu. The book is extremely interesting, although it is not a "history of the Gikuyu from 1500", but a valuable history of the Gikuyu from late 1800 to early 1900. In fact, Muriuki simply lists the names of the Gikuyu ruling generations, giving a hypothetical chronology of the periods in which they ruled, going back to 1512 (cf. p. 20). Muriuki himself admits in his introduction that it is very difficult "for the historian in Africa who utilizes oral traditions as a source of evidence" to establish a reliable chronology" (p. 14). We agree with the anthropologist Claude Tardits that: "Les recherches historiques qui se sont multipliées dans les vingt-cinq dernières années sont restées prudentes et elles montrent que l'histoire au-delà des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles, est, sauf exception, conjecturale. La reconstrution historique du passé d'une societé implique d'ailleurs que l'on preune en compte ses institutions actuelles, donc que l'on soit familiarisé avec les données anthropologiques: par ailleurs l'anthropologue ne peut, de son coté, s'engager dans la reconstitution d'une histoire lorsqu'elle devient

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Cavicchi, Edmondo (IMC), Problems of Change in Kikuyu Tribal Society, Bologna, EMI 1977(40).

Muriuki, Godfrey, People Round Mount Kenya, London, Evans Brothers 1978(41).

Bottignole, Silvana, Una chiesa africana si interroga (An African Church Questions Itself), Brescia, Morcelliana 1981; Engl. trans. Kikuyu Traditional Culture and Christianity, Nairobi, Heinemann 1984(42).

Mugo, E.N., Kikuyu People: A Brief Outline of Their Customs and Traditions, Nairobi, Kenya Literature Bureau 1982.

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hypotéthique ("Les Temps des Incertitudes", Cahiers du Monde russe et sovietique, XXX, (2-3), avril-septembre 1990, pp. 460-1, our emphasis).

(40) Fr Cavicchi was a Consolata missionary who had worked in Gikuyuland for twenty years. His book is a study of the articles and letters contained in Wathiomo Mukinyu grouped by subject. The texts are given in the Gikuyu original and in English, in a very literal translation which is very useful to get an idea of the complexity of the Gikuyu language. Appendix IV contains a valuable "List of Terms Common to Both the Kikuyu-Meru and the Masai Languages". Fr Cavicchi was a highly intelligent man and very fluent in Gikuyu, Meru and Maasai. Unfortunately, he had a traumatic experience which deeply changed him and from which he never fully recovered (in 1953 his mission was attacked by Mau Mau fighters, a nun was killed and he was wounded). Although the introductory essay is poor, the work done by Fr Cavicchi is very valuable as there is no specific study on the first and second generation of Gikuyu Christian converts. We believe that an analysis of their motives and aspirations would be very interesting and also relevant to the study of class-formation in Gikuyuland (see also 1.12). Fr Cavicchi helped Fr Merlo Pich to translate and interpret the text of the gicandi published in Ndai na Gicandi: Kikuyu Enigmas - Enigmi Kikuyu (see Appendix 3.4 under Merlo Pick, 1973).

(41) This booklet is directed to school-children; it contains numerous drawings.

(42) Actually this is not a study of "Kikuyu traditional Culture and Christianity", but a discussion of the results of a questionnaire presented to the Gikuyu Christians of Nyeri Diocese. I included this text in my bibliography because readers may be misled by the English title (the Italian title, on the contrary, reflects the actual content of the book).

Neckebrouck, Valeer(43), "Irua Circumcision Songs of the Gikuyu" (forthcoming).

3.4 Bibliography of collections of Gikuyu Oral Literature

Barett, W.E., "Akikuyu Fairy Tales (Rogano)", Man: A Monthly Record of Anthropological Science, Nos. 22, 58, 98, 1912 and Nos. 6, 14, 44, 1913.

Barra, Giuseppe (IMC) ed.(44), 1000 Kikuyu Proverbs, Nyeri, Consolata Catholic Mission Printing School 1939; repr. London, Oxford University Press 1960.

Ghilardi, Valentino (IMC), "La sapienza dei vecchi nei proverbi Ghekoyo" (The Wisdom of the Elders in Gikuyu Proverbs), Missioni Consolata, aprile 1940, pp. 58-9.

Itotia, Justin; Dougall, James, "The Voice of Africa: Kikuyu Proverbs", Africa, 1, 1928.

Itotia, Justin(45), Thimo cia Ugikuyu Itari Thimure: Gicunji kia Mbere (Gikuyu Proverbs Without Explanation: Part One)(46), Kikuyu, Justin Itotia Bookshop 1944.

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(43) The author is a Belgian priest currently teaching at the University of Leuven in Belgium. In the seventies he carried out anthropological research in Kenya among the Gikuyu and the Maasai.

(44) Giuseppe Barra edited the first collection of Gikuyu proverbs ever published, although Fr Cagnolo had already listed a number of Gikuyu proverbs in his book on the Gikuyu people (see bibliography of studies on the Gikuyu people under Cagnolo). 5,000 copies of Barra's book were printed. The proverbs are in alphabetical order in Gikuyu. Each proverb is translated literally into English, then explained (if obscure) and finally the English equivalent of the Gikuyu proverb is given. The 1,000 proverbs contained in the book were selected from collections "made by several Consolata Fathers since the early years of the Mission and from lists supplied by natives in response to a competitioon launched by the Mission's monthly magazine Wathiomo Mokinyu" (Foreword, p. 2).

(45) The author worked with the Church of Scotland Mission at Tumutumu, see 1.10.

(46) As far as I know, he never published Part Two.

Macpherson, Robert comp., Muthomere wa Gikuyu: Ng'ano (Learning Gikuyu: Foktales), Nairobi, CMS Bookshop(47) March 1943 (repr. June 1943, January 1944, June 1945; London, Longmans 1950, repr. 1951 and 1952).

Gathigira, Stanley Kiama(48), Ng'ano na Thimo cia Ugikuyu (Gikuyu Folktales and Proverbs), Nairobi, The Eagle Press 1950.

Gecaga, B. Mareka, Gwata Ndai: Ndai na Ng'ano (Answer the Riddles: Riddles and Folktales), Nairobi, The Eagle Press 1950; repr. 1956; repr. London, Nelson 1963.

Committee of World Literacy and Christian Literature, Ng'ano Ikumi na Ithano cia Gikuyu (Fifteen Gikuyu Folktales), Nairobi, The Eagle Press (East African Literature Bureau) 1957 .

Ghilardi, Valentino (IMC), "Poesie-canti kikuyu" (Gikuyu Poems-Songs), Africa, anno XXI, n. 2, giugno 1966. pp. 163-186.

Njururi, Ngumbu(50), Agikuyu Folk Tales, London, Oxford University Press 1966 (2nd ed. Tales from Mount Kenya, Nairobi, Transafrica 1975; repr. 1986).

Njururi, N.; Waweru, H., Ndai cia Agikuyu (Gikuyu Riddles), Nairobi, Longman Kenya 1967 (repr. 1984, 1986).

Merlo Pick, Vittorio (IMC), Miti e leggende kikuyu (Gikuyu Myths and Legends), Bologna, EMI 1967.

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(47) The book consists of Gikuyu folktales and short stories in Gikuyu followed by comprehension exercises. We have got the 1952 edition published by Longman, where there is no reference to the publishing house which first published the book. The book was probably published either by the CMS Bookshop, which published Murutanire wa Ugikuyu: Ibuku ria Mbere Standard A (Learn Gikuyu: First Book Standard A) by the same author in 1942, or by the East African Literature Bureau, which published Murutanire wa Ibuku ria Ng'ano (Scheme or Work for Teaching Gikuyu Folktales), in 1950. We read in the 1952 edition: "the compiler "wish to acknowledge their indebtedness to the Church of Scotland Mission and the Africa Inland Mission for permission to use material from their Kikuyu Readers" (p. ii).

(48) Cf. note 34.

(50) The author has been in politics since the sixties. At present he is the MP for Mukurweini in Gikuyuland and an Assistant Minister in the Office of the President.

Merlo Pick, Vittorio (IMC), Favole Kikuyu (Gikuyu Folktales), Torino, Quaderni Missionari 1967.

Merlo Pick, Vittorio (IMC), "Cultura e letteratura kikuyu" (Gikuyu Culture and Literature), Africa, marzo 1968.

Njururi, Ngumbu, Gikuyu Proverbs with an English Translation, London, Macmillan 1968; Oxford University Press 1969; rev. ed. by Alexander and Esmee Gichuke, Nairobi, Oxford University Press 1983(51); repr. 1984.

Gecau, R.N., Kikuyu Folktales, Nairobi, East African Literature Bureau 1970.

Mwangi, Rose, Kikuyu Folktales, Nairobi, Kenya Literature Bureau 1970; 2nd ed. 1976; 3rd ed. 1982; repr. 1983.

Wahome, John Kamenyi, Songs of Kenya: Embu, Gikuyu na Meru, Nairobi, Jemisik Cultural Books 1970 (repr. 1987).

Merlo Pick, Vittorio (IMC), Ndai na Gicandi: Kikuyu Enigmas - Enigmi Kikuyu, Bologna, EMI 1973(52).

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(51) Alexander and Esmee Gichuke "(...) have provided a new English translation and interpretation for each proverb and [have] matched each proverb with an English one" (Publisher's Preface). The Gikuyu proverbs are arranged in alphabetical order. Each proverb is followed by a literal translation, a brief interpretation, and the equivalent English proverb.

(52) The book contains the Gikuyu original followed by an English and Italian translation. The first part presents numerous ndai (riddles) collected by Fr Merlo Pich between 1923 and 1950. The second part, extremely valuable, contains a gicandi, a long poem made up of elaborated enigmas, which the singer sang playing a rattle. The instrument, a bottle-shaped gourd, was specially prepared by the medicineman and it bore, carved on its side, inscriptions in the mnemonic-pictorial system. The gicandi was not sung by a soloist and a chorus, as are the other Gikuyu traditional songs, but by two singers. The gicandi singers used to visit the market places in Gikuyuland. One of them proposed an enigma and the other had to explain it and then propose another enigma to the other singer. The competition went on until one of the two singers failed to give the interpretation and lost. The discovery of the gicandi was particularly important since the carvings on the instrument represent the only form of picture-drawing or writing found among the Gikuyu and their neighbouring peoples. The Routledges were the first Europeans to notice the existence of the gicandi, but unfortunately they could not find reliable informants to explain the significance of the poem and the meaning of the drawings (see our

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Wahome, John Kamenyi, Traditional Music and Songs for Adult Education: Gikuyu, Nairobi, East African Literature Bureau 1974.

Mugia, D. Kinuthia(53), Urathi wa Cege wa Kibiru (The Prophecies of Cege wa Kibiru), Nairobi, Kenya Literature Bureau 1979.

Pre-School Section of the Kenya Institute of Education, Ng'ano Ciitu: ibuku ria mbere (Our Folktales: Book One), Nairobi, Kenya Institute of Education 1983.

Pre-School Section of the Kenya Institute of Education, Ng'ano Ciitu: ibuku ria keri (Our Folktales: Book Two), Kenya Institute of Education 1983.

Wahome, John Kamenyi, Wamugumo: Legends and Adventures of Wamugumo the Great, Nairobi, Jemisik Cultural Books 1986.

Kabira, Wanjiku Mukabi, The Oral Artist, Nairobi, Heinemann 1983; repr. 1987(54).

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bibliography under Routledge, 1910). They sent two gicandi instruments to the British Museum. Kahora's instrument is kept at the Consolata Museum in Turin. The gicandi published by Fr Merlo Pich was written down for him by a gicandi singer, John Kahora, who became a teacher and a catechist at Limuru Consolata Mission. He also translated into Gikuyu a booklet in Kiswahili based on Biblical stories, Mikire Mithure ya Gitigo gia Tene (Chosen Ways of Olden Customs), Nyeri, Consolata Catholic Mission Printing School 1936. Fr Valentino Ghilardi translated part of Kahora's gicandi for an article he published in 1966 (see our bibliography under Ghilardi). Kahora's gicandi instrument is kept at the Consolata's museum in Turin, Italy. Unfortunately it seems that nowadays no gicandi singer is still alive.

(53) On Kinuthia D. Mugia see 2.10.

(54) The book presents several narratives as they were told to the author, a lecturer in Oral Literature at Nairobi University, by the oral teller Kabebe wa Wanyaroco. She collected the material in the course of her field-research in Kiambu District in 1977. The narratives, which are presented in their Gikuyu original and in English translation, are preceded by five chapters on the oral artist and oral narratives. The introductory chapters are interesting, but they are too short and look more like a list of points for further discussion than accomplished essays, as one would expect from a book written by an academic and directed to university students. The "Bibliography" (of oral literature? of quoted books?) at the end of the book lists only nine titles and no works of criticism. The author holds an M.A. degree from the

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Kabira, Wanjiku Mukabi; Mutahi, Karega, eds., Gikuyu Oral Literature, Nairobi, Heinemann Kenya 1988(55).

Kenya Women Literature Group, Nyina wa Airitu na Ng'ano Ingi (The Mother of Girls and Other Stories), Kisumu, Lake Publishers 1990(56).

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University of Wisconsin, Madison, but I could not find out whether this book grew out of her M.A. dissertation. She is co-editor of another collection of Gikuyu oral literature (see next entry).

(55) The book is simply a collection of folktales, proverbs, riddles and songs in Gikuyu followed by a literal English translation. No foot-notes are included to explain the complex meaning of some words. The introduction and the introductory essays preceeding each chapter are extremely poor. This seems inexplicable in so much as the authors are two scholars and the book, published by a prestigious multinational company, is directed to university students.

(56) The book is also available in English.